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Scott Fitzgerald was continuing a tradition of men playing female roles in the dramatic productions of Princeton's Triangle Club when, in 1915, he wore this luxuriant costume in a musical, The Evil Eye. The photograph, which is taken from the book reviewed on page 221, appeared in several newspapers and prompted the theatrical agent to offer Fitzgerald a job as a vaudeville female impersonator.

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CINEMA

Tying, untying and tying again

By S. S. PRAWER

STANLEY CAVELL:
Pursuits of Happiness
The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage
283pp. Harvard University Press.
£12.25
0 674 13905 1

The remarriage of two Hollywood stars - whether impermanent and unsuccessful, like that of Richard Burton to Elizabeth Taylor, or lasting, like that of Robert Wagner to the late Natalie Wood - has always fascinated gossip-columnists and their readers. Now we find Stanley Cavell, Professor of Aesthetics at Harvard and author of a celebrated ontology of film (*The World Viewed*, first published in 1971), discovering remarriage as a central theme in a group of related Hollywood comedies made between 1934 and 1949: *The Lady Eve*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *The Awful Truth*, *His Girl Friday*, and *Adam's Rib*, a group to which Cavell adds two other films of the period with which these share family resemblances: *It Happened One Night* and *Bringing Up Baby*.

Such comedies, enjoyable singly, gain by being seen as a group. They are what they are, as Professor Cavell puts it, in view of one another. Their heroines tend to be married women rather than young girls on the brink of marriage; they are played by a talented group of actresses born between 1904 and 1911 (Rosalind Russell, Katharine Hepburn, Irene Dunne, Barbara Stanwyck and Claudette Colbert) who are joined by such photogenic partners as Cary Grant, Spencer Tracy, Clark Gable and Henry Fonda. The questions these films typically ask and answer are what constitutes a marriage; what makes two go into one in such a way that neither partner compromises his human dignity. They are "comedies of equality", turning on a search for reaffirmation in the course of which each partner grows in self-knowledge as well as in appreciation of the other's legitimate claims. Something internal to the task of marriage causes "trouble in paradise" - as if marriage, which is a ratification, were itself in need of ratification.

That ratification is found when marriage itself becomes romance and



Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable in *It Happened One Night*, 1934 (see caption overleaf for publication details).

adventure. In making it so, the central characters of these films have to accept their sexual identity and desire. They fight for recognition, for the acknowledgment of rights and obligations, for mutual understanding and tolerance. There are verbal battles, struggles of will in which each gives as good as he or she gets, attempted flights from commitment, until, in the end, forgiveness is won, or a reprieve - a new beginning, a new innocence. *Pursuits of Happiness* underplays what used to be called the "screwball" element in these central characters - it is significant that the term "screwball comedy", by which works like *Bringing Up Baby* used to be known, never occurs in this book - but it shows very well how such films manage to "subvert" farce and approach the spirit of late

Shakespearean romance. *The Winter's Tale* indeed, that greatest of all plays of remarriage, of a marriage-partner lost and found again, may be seen as their ideal type. Professor Cavell has much that is timely to say about the moral and social implications of these themes. His dogged pursuit of them through seven chapters, each devoted to a close reading of one film, should help to dispel an image of American culture popularized by Leslie Fiedler: a vision of American man on the run, hurried into the forest or out, to sea, down the river or into combat, anywhere to avoid the confrontation of a man and a woman which leads to the fall into sex, marriage and responsibility; of a world of fear and loneliness; of "a chamber of horrors" disguised as an amusement-park "fun

with the usual notions of class-privilege, money-power and economic "basis" or sub-structure. He recognizes that the milieu of conspicuous wealth in which so many of these comedies have been set makes them "fables of the Depression", dream-gratifications for the poor and out-of-work. But that is neither the only nor even the chief function wealth has in the "remarriage" cycle. Luxurious living, financial security, are necessary because they provide an environment of leisure within which the experiment of the film can take place. The sparring, the conversations dispelling enmity and reaffirming love, require lavish expenditure of time, time which enables the central characters to find one another and readjust to one another. Discussions of the "leisure-world" presupposed by these comedies leads naturally into a discussion of Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* - a theory Professor Cavell unexpectedly finds less adequate for an analysis of films like *The Philadelphia Story* than de Tocqueville's discussions of "aristocracy" and its equivalents in American society.

This is perhaps the most surprising feature of *Pursuits of Happiness*: that the entertaining films with which it deals can be so constantly illuminated by works that belong to a quite different order of discourse. By references to Hobbes, for instance, or to Kant, to Wittgenstein, to Heidegger; to Milton's tract on divorce; to the literary critics' distinctions between the world of Shakespearean and that of Jonsonian comedy.

But what about the charge that the works discussed in *Pursuits of Happiness* offer nothing but "escapist" entertainment? In the course of a passage that seeks to define what the idea of reprieve signifies in *His Girl Friday*, Cavell gives his own characterful answer. "In one way it may be taken as 'escape' (in which case you must keep escaping); in another way it may be taken as refreshment and recreation (in which case you are free to stop and think)." No book about the art of Hollywood that I have ever read can make its readers stop and think more effectively than this one - even if their aesthetic and moral valuation of some of these works differs from that of its author.

Cavell's "readings" makes us appreciate the overall shape and

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structure of the film he discusses as effectively as their technical details: lighting, focus, camera movement, which are invariably interrogated about their function, their place in a total, developing meaning. "Observing what the camera does in a given sequence," he tells us, "is an essential part of 'reading' a film" and he proceeds in suit the action to the word by providing illuminating exegeses of (for example) the tracking-shots and interior lighting of *His Girl Friday*. He shows himself sensitively aware of the varying stylistic styles that characterize the small group of actors who play central roles in the seven films he discusses, as well as the directing-styles of Cukor, Hawks, Capra, Sturges and McCarey. He explains very well what different directors manage to find in different stars - how Howard Hawks, for instance discovers Cary Grant's "photogenic tendency to thoughtfulness, some inner concentration of intellectual energy".

He also has a sure eye and ear for thematically important ideas and objects in the films discussed: items of food, in *It Happened One Night*, and their relation to the prevailing theme of literal and metaphorical hunger; the notion of the puppet-stage, or Punch-and-Judy show, in *Adam's Rib*, and its relation to the bed-curtains at the end of the work; or the newspaper, not only in *His Girl Friday* and *It Happened One Night*, but also in films of remarriage whose central figures are not journalists. And what an eye he has for the significance of places of setting: the "green world" of Connecticut, the "black world" of prison-house and death-cell, the mansions of the rich, restaurants, newspaper offices, buses, the open road are all shown to have particular and important functions in the films in which they are observed. Scenes we all remember - from the animated titles of *The Lady Eve* to the "Walls of Jericho" sequences of *It Happened One Night* - become more memorable, and more significant, when *Pursuits of Happiness* has taught us to relate them to underlying myths, or arguments, or cinematic self-references, in the works that contain them.

This lost idea - the way a film draws attention to itself as a film - is pursued through all the essays that make up *Pursuits of Happiness*. We are shown, in fascinating detail, how characters in the works discussed act as surrogates for the director, how the activity of the camera and the photographed nature of the world we see on the screen are emphasized by devices that include film-within-film, snapshots or production stills that almost (but not quite) fill the screen-space, doubling or splitting of projected presences, and so on. Objects in films, the book suggests, are "always already displaced": the camera, it shows, tends not only to reveal the actors' "invisible selves", but also its own invisible presence. Another quality of the camera we are taught to recognize is its tendency to give "a natural ascendancy of the flesh-and-blood actor over the character he or she plays in the film". Directors of comedy like to draw attention to this last fact by all sorts of references within the movie.

Among the other virtues of this stimulating study are its awareness of the significance of absences as well as presences (why have the women in these films fathers but no mothers? Why are there so few children? And the fact that most of the time it knows when not to go on elaborating. Cavell shows himself fully aware of the impossibility of discussing all possible interpretations; he therefore chooses a line that seems to him interesting and important and follows it through as far as it will take him, to "conclusions" but ones which are provisional, so that others are prompted to continue them. That we, as readers, can take part in the conversation the book conducts. We can ask, for instance, how the role that William Demarest is shown to play in the structure and argument of *The Lady Eve* relates to that which he plays in so many other Preston Sturges films, from *The Great McGinty* to *Miracle of Morgan's Creek* and beyond, and how the extraordinary aura Demarest acquires through his presence in these films is then exploited by the American "viewer" in the wake of the vanished American

World. Or we might take Professor Cavell's analyses as models for thinking about other groups of film-comedy in which marriages are tested: the cycle of the 1960s, for example, which begins with *Love Come Back* in 1961 and runs through *Divorce American Style* (1967) to the under-valued *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice* of 1969.

Inevitably we shall find ourselves disagreeing with some of the analyses in *Pursuits of Happiness*, which sometimes stop too short. There are also, it must be admitted, a few irritations. Among these we must count some disconcerting stylistic lurches from academic ponderousness to punning pyrotechnics, verbal sleight of hand, and unnecessarily horrendous imagery. There is also a certain amount of cultural over-association - I do not find my experience of soft-focus images of Claudette Colbert in *It Happened One Night* enriched by having them compared to Bernini's sculptured St Teresa, nor do I find any resemblance worth mentioning between Cary Grant precariously clinging to a car in *Bringing Up Baby* and Europa clinging to her bull. And then there are the glibly dismissive asides. In *The World Viewed* the victim was *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*; in *Pursuits of Happiness* it is *Clint Eastwood*, of which we are told that "the craft lies in its effects, not in its basis... the workmanship is arbitrary, not authoritative". Orson Welles's career is tragic enough without having his one uncompromised masterpiece taken down in this offhand way by one of the few critics whose word really counts for something.

What is one to make of the relegation of *Dead of Night* to the category of "films merely meant to terrorize us", as opposed to *The Night of the*

Living Dead, where we can find "a perception of the instability of the fact of human existence, its neighbouring of the inhuman, the monstrous"? True enough, the film directed by Cavalcanti, Hamer and others uses a gentler, more traditional idiom than Romero's violently explicit one; but do not its framing sequences (with Mervyn Johns as their central figure), the mirror episode (with Googie Withers), and the ventriloquist episode (Michael Redgrave as his neurotic best) suggest "instability" and the neighbouring of the human and inhuman [or monstrous] as clearly as *The Night of the Living Dead*?

Pursuits of Happiness persistently underestimates - in a way one would have thought impossible after Richard Corliss's *Talking Pictures* - the role played by Hollywood script-writers in determining the tone and import of their films. It is one thing to say that improvisation and rewriting constantly alter scripts during production - no one who has read Rosalind Russell's amusing and illuminating account, in *Life Is a Banquet*, of the way *His Girl Friday* was made can have any doubt about that - but to analyse the conversational exchanges and the narrative sequence of *It Happened One Night* without so much as telling us who had the original idea and who provided the initial script that Capra worked on is a bit like saying that the United States often multiple showings of the same movie on the same day or in the same week, and the growing availability of video-recorders will make private study of whole films and individual frame-sequences more and more common. At the same time, technical advances in television projection (including screens with adjustable aspect-ratio) promise to



Beny Hutton, Diana Lynn and William Demarest in a scene from *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1944). Preston Sturges's brilliant wartime farce. The illustration is taken from *The Movies* by Richard Griffiths, Arthur Moyer and Ellen Bowser, which is now available in a revised and updated edition (560pp. Columbus Books, £12.95, 0 86237 002 X).

Our way of viewing films is rapidly changing. More and more people are finding it possible to see the same work, repeatedly rather than just once; film-libraries and film-courses and cable companies in the United States offer multiple showings of the same movie on the same day or in the same week; and the growing availability of video-recorders will make private study of whole films and individual frame-sequences more and more common. At the same time, technical advances in television projection (including screens with adjustable aspect-ratio) promise to

help to close the gap which exists between the image seen in the cinema and that seen in our living-rooms. This cannot but make us more conscious of the benefit of going to a worthwhile film the kind of sustained and repeated attention we give to a worthwhile book; and it is therefore good to have an interpreter as informed and sensitive as Professor Cavell to help us deepen our experience. Books like *The World Viewed* and *Pursuits of Happiness* show with gratifying clarity that in academic film-criticism the structuralist and semiotic game is decidedly not the only one in town.

by turning the tables. "What have you learned from your guests?" he asks. Cavett later tells Sklar, "It's a little like school... it's like a continuing education." Whereupon Sklar, the good liberal, waxes religious. "And because of Dick Cavett, I continue our own liberal education." Any time now, incidentally, heaven will open for Sklar and his friends: Mervyn Bragg's *South Bank Show* is to be broadcast in America.

Over much of the book, the shadow of things British hangs heavy. *Till Death Us Do Part*, of course, spawned a large family of American spin-offs. America's Public Broadcasting Service (largely British) is a constant reminder of what good television is all about, and Britain is the exemplar even in the realm of criticism. Sklar notes with envy that in Britain critics review programmes "after they're aired": in America, criticism is principally a preview service. Even in his description of a game show the paranoia creeps in: Ned Sherrin (for it is he) "is portraying the American fantasy of the urbane British intellectual - quick-witted, sharp-tongued, imperturbable, and infinitely superior... Some panelists respond... by approaching the experience as an oral exam."

Sitting at the feet of the president of Universal television, Sklar records a defence of the status quo: "Popular entertainment has always had some violence with it. There are two very compelling things to people - life and death. Life is directly tied to sex. Death is directly tied to violence. It's no real surprise an audience would want to watch shows dealing with these subjects."

Sitting at Law Grade's feet Hunter Davies records a not dissimilar noise. "An ideal evening for me to watch at home would be *The Paraders*, or perhaps *The Saint* or *Danger Man*. Then a good half-hour comedy, like *On The Buses*. Then something like *The Main Chance*. Throw in the news, and for me that would be a lovely evening." Lord Grade immediately follows this up with a ringing defence of Mrs. Whitehouse ("Don't give me that permissive society, I don't believe in it") but his kniship to his transatlantic cousin in

The subtitle of *The Grades* is "The First Family of British Entertainment", and if the family is the focus of the periphery contains much of interest about the world they have triple-handedly created. From charleston competitions in the Mile End Road via control of the Palladium to domination of the entire showbiz scene, their personal story is simultaneously the story of how the variety tradition came to permeate British family viewing. "It's no good making money mit your feet, make money mit your brains", Lew and Bernie were told by their redoubtable mother Olga in 1935. They became agents forthwith, and by a combination of luck, determination and convenient connections quickly swam to the top. The process by which the agent-impressarios wrestled power from the theatre owners makes an exhilarating tale, and Hunter Davies tells it well. But how all three brothers moved into film and television, at a time when the brand-new variety war was voraciously consuming ratings talent, makes less encouraging reading: they may have presided over some individual productions of very high quality, but their control over both the creation of goods and the marketplace in which those goods were sold has had a stultifying effect on the medium as a whole.

"They didn't necessarily change the world for the better... but they have given pleasure. We shall not see their like again", intones Davies at the end of his book, by which time readers who have stayed the course will have grown rather tired of such sentiments. No matter what the clever brother, the ruthless brother or the charming brother (and they are no angels) do, only the gentlest criticisms are permitted by this loving biographer.

The Grades have been caught in the nick of time: the *Titanic* has now sunk, *The Muppets* have been sold for a mess of pottage and Lord Laws' entire empire looks as if it may be crumbling. *The Grades*, however, will live on in a most poetically just form. Hunter Davies's book is now to be turned into a BBC drama-documentary, under the baton of the man who created that notable cine-verité saga *The Family*. Michael Grade, meanwhile, has gone to a top television job - in America.

POETRY

The namers of things

By T. A. Shippey

W. H. AUDEN and PAUL B. TAYLOR:
Norse Poems
256pp. Athlone Press. £7.95.
0 485 11226 4

There is not much poetry anywhere on a level with the *Elder Edda*, and maybe no one can translate it as it deserves: the world has grown too soft. Still, if anyone could, it ought to be Auden. His own art - as John Bayley said in these pages recently (TLS, December 11, 1981) - aimed at "a bleak impersonal severity". He seemed himself to be a "scald or court poet", he came as close as any modern writer can to those bodiless authoritative namers of things who produced the *Rígsstula* (which tells how kings and empires arose), or the *Völuspá* (which says how the worlds began and how they will end), or the *Hávamál*, which reaches back 1600 years from us and 600 from its composer to the ruin of the Celtic kingdom in central Europe and the great deeds of Gibbon forgot. "It was not now; it was not yesterday. But long ago; it has long past." Auden's directness and scorn for fineness of words or grammar are (in those lines) exactly those of his original. Certainly this volume, of forty-one poems - twenty-five more than in the familiar Faber paperback of 1973 - is the best introduction to Norse literature which has ever appeared in English. And yet reading it you are still conscious of what has been lost, what can no longer be said.

Translating Eddic poems into English seems so easy. The syntax is straightforward, the verse-forms are plain and natural, the vocabulary is often oppressively close to the English of everyday. Just short of the climax of the *Atlakvǫlha*, Gunnarr, king of the Burgundians, who has ridden on a dare into the hands of Atilla the Hun, declares that before he will pay ransom with the Niflung gold he must see the heart of his brother Högni. Suspicious, the Huns butcher a cook instead. But when they bring his heart, Gunnarr says:

Hér heill ec hǫrta. Hǫrta þu bláutia, dǫtt hǫrta Högni ins frœna, er mǫg þílfaz, er á bǫðli lǫgr: þílfiz þú lǫgr, er l bǫðli lǫgr.

It trembles much, as it lies on the trencher, still it trembled more, when it stayed in his breast.

The emphatic repetition *lǫgr lǫgr* has to go in favour of "lies I stayed", the larger word needed for alliteration; the word "trencher" has crept in. This is no doubt accurate. *Bláutia* may well have meant, to a Norseman, a wooden board, not a china plate. But "trencher" means nothing at all to us, though we have heard of "trenchermen". Has it come in to alliterate with "tremble"? Or is there another faint pressure on the translator, which has also eliminated the rude and scornful *hǫfva meirr*, "more by half"?

Native idioms have moved down-market since the time of the *Edda*. Translating from Old English or Old Norse, you find again and again that the words and phrases go straight into modern English equivalents: but when they sound vulgar, *Göngum þang stia*, cry the young princes in *Völundarkvitha*, "let's go see the ring!"

Every word except four goes straight into modern English. Translating almost verbatim:

Here I have the heart of Hjalte the coward,
Not like the heart of Högni the bold.
Mueh it quakes as it lies on the plate,
It quaked more by half when it lay in his breast.

Many things in this are hard to understand, and many more are prohibited by our official culture. Why does Gunnarr want his brother's heart? How can he want it and at the same time proclaim its superiority to all substitutes? Should he not care for a moment about the wretched cook? How elementary to think that courage is not a matter of "moral fibre", but just plain "guts"! Still, one can't help feeling just a little tinking with the alliteration, and this will be in verse practically by itself.

It doesn't go. Auden's translation is exactly the same as the above for the first two lines, except that "Not like" is replaced by "Unlike", following the form of the original *ólíka*. Even that seems wrong, to my ear, for in English you can be "rather unlike", "fairly unlike", and half-tones are not Gunnarr's style. The next two lines come out as:

It trembles much, as it lies on the trencher, still it trembled more, when it stayed in his breast.

The emphatic repetition *lǫgr lǫgr* has to go in favour of "lies I stayed", the larger word needed for alliteration; the word "trencher" has crept in. This is no doubt accurate. *Bláutia* may well have meant, to a Norseman, a wooden board, not a china plate. But "trencher" means nothing at all to us, though we have heard of "trenchermen". Has it come in to alliterate with "tremble"? Or is there another faint pressure on the translator, which has also eliminated the rude and scornful *hǫfva meirr*, "more by half"?

Native idioms have moved down-market since the time of the *Edda*. Translating from Old English or Old Norse, you find again and again that the words and phrases go straight into modern English equivalents: but when they sound vulgar, *Göngum þang stia*, cry the young princes in *Völundarkvitha*, "let's go see the ring!"

The Last King

When the last king he goes into the dark
There will be mourning, though the mourners may
Not know their grieving's cause, nor even mark
That what they do is grieve. And on that day
The sun will seem unwilling to appear,
Its hearththings fan unseasonably chill;
But there will be no sweating mob to cheer
The faraway speech and axman's glinting skill
Or panic of a sudden mazzle-flash
And crack. The last king will not leave us thus.
His dying, silent, soft as falling ash,
Occurring with no ceremonial fuss
Will be enacted in a hotel room
After his undramatic abdication,
Hearing the whisper, in the deepening gloom,
Of alien seas; his slow assassination
Performed by his own treasonous appetites.
So he will lie, the table at his side
Bearing no royal relics; the stiff lights
From curtain chink and passing cars outside
Show only his dark spectacles instead.
As he, fat bag containing cooling bones,
Lies incognito on the common bed.
And afterwards, no orchestra of moans,
No formal, public panoply of grief,
Gun-carriage, sleek black plume or muffled drum.
Yet his uncommon spectre, this last leaf
Now fallen from the doomed tree will become
A drifting presence; insubstantial, faint.
Ubiquitous, a whiff of something rare,
The scent of gold; heard, too - complaint
Of ancient instruments on evening air,
And seen at fading moments in the night,
Gold gleam in black recess, lost coin, a glow
Of tiny lamp, quick spark, a dying light.
Whose ultimate extinction we now see
Pretender, slave, republican or clerk
Will disinherit all, for all will be
Mysteriously diminished by that dark.

Vernon Scannell

When King Nihhad catches the smith Völund, he hamsrings him and makes him a slave; Völund in revenge murders the king's sons, hides their bodies in his forge, makes goblets of their skulls, jewels of their eyeballs, brooches of their teeth, gives them all to his master. How appropriate the lines: "he sat, he hid not sleep, always he struck with his hammer; he zealously he made the cunning thing (vaf) for Nihhad!" In the end he makes himself wings too, and flies away, for all his maimed legs. But this story does not (quite) belong for Auden. The stoic silence betrayed only by glittering eyes, the alternation of patience and sudden movement - these are now hard to catch or convey. When the young princes come to Völund's bait of treasure, the original says: *Konur útr il kinn, kröfho lúta, i opin var illit, er their l sá, or verbatim again, "they came to the chest, craved keys, (it was) malice was open, as they saw in". Auden has:*

They beheld a chest, they asked for a key.
Evil was on them as in they looked.

This is less natural ("baheld"), less ambiguous ("asked for"), and it has lost the complex of meaning around *opin*.

By contrast a more obviously high-wrought poem like the *Skirniskvitha* draws a zest and cunning from Auden which is absolutely right. The god Frey falls in love from afar with a giant-maiden; sends his servant Skirnir to woo for him; persuasion and bribery having failed, Skirnir turns to threats and magic runes, a curse of filth and frenzied lust:

Hrimgrmr shall have you, the hideous troll,
Beside the doors of the dead,
Under the tree-root ugly scullions
Pour you the piss of goats;

Auden's poems accordingly seem to get better as their originals rise towards complexity, but to quell before plain grandeur, especially when this is also savage, ferocious, joose. The heart of the *Völundarkvitha* (to my mind) is the deeply-felt pun on *vaf*, at once a precious thing, a beautiful thing, a work of art, and a complex stratagem of blood end

Nothing else shall you ever drink,
Never what you wish,
Ever what I wish.

The maiden submits; back goes Skirnir with a wedding-day; tells Frey before he has so much as dismounted, and gets the passionate, graceless, ungrateful reply:

Long is one night, longer are two,
Endless the thought of three.
Many a month has moved more swiftly
Than this half of a bridal eve.

Even, I think, the hints of myth in all this - for Frey is god of increase, Skirnir maybe "the shining one", the greatest image of ice and rejection - come through in Auden's poem, softening the tale of statutory rape. Many of the others are just as good.

This volume contains the twenty-nine poems of the *Codex Regius*; the six poems in similar style added to them in standard editions of the *Edda*; further associated poems from the *Saga of King Heidrek*; the "Lay of Erik" about the historical Erik Bloodaxe, killed at Stainmoor in the North Riding in 954; and the magnificent Christian vision of "The Sun Song". It is hard to give more than a rumour of the variety this comprises. The whole thing has been done with great scrupulousity, from the preparation of "raw" translations by Paul Taylor to the full versions by Auden (who, however, did not work from the English but from that and the Icelandic at once), and to the final editing by Professor Taylor once more. Because of the old and intimate relationship between the languages of the North, everyone now may well think he can do better; but probably no one could. This is a book to keep and write in the margins of till you die. I would pay a lot for a volume of introductions and notes.

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WHY I AM STILL A CATHOLIC

Contributions by: Piers Paul Read, Bernard Bergson, Mary Craig, Clifford Longley, Jim Mackey, Louis McRedmond, edited by Robert Nowell.
May 1981, 0 00 215247 9

Collins

2000 years on

By Peter Green

F. W. WALBANK:

The Hellenistic World
287pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95
(paperback, Fintona, £2.95).
0 7108 03109

JOHN BRISCOE:

A Commentary on Livy
Books XXXIV-XXXVII
442pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £25.
0 19 81455 5

The Hellenistic Age - those three crowded cosmopolitan centuries between the death of Alexander and Cleopatra's defeat by Octavian - offers us a rich, and at times daunting, disconcerting, sense of *déjà vu* to any student of contemporary society. The resemblances are numerous and close. We find the same widespread reversion from democratic institutions to authoritarian regimes, the same sense of psychological and aesthetic fragmentation, the same anti-rationalist trends, the same social solipsism and self-absorption, the same active promotion of the elite at the expense of the creator, the same obsessive pursuit of affluence, exotic religious cults, fads in astrology and magic, off-beat eroticism; the same preoccupation with mere bigness (or, out of reaction, smallness), the same retreat from political involvement, the same cultivation of private inner gardens (Epictetus or other) at the expense of the public domain, the same tendency to fuel academic development on governmental (or, now, industrial) patronage, the same cringing sense of facelessness in Megalopolis, the depersonalized world of the Big City.

It is not, then, to be wondered at that after years of comparative neglect - there is still a regrettable hankering among historians of treating all Greek history later than 323 as a faintly distasteful appendix to higher things - the study of Hellenistic institutions, long promoted for their own ends, by professional papyrologists, should be today enjoying something of a boom. What is surprising is the absence of a really good, penetrating, comprehensive synthesis of this extraordinary period in the English language. We have numerous excellent specialist studies, often on a massive scale, eg. Rostovtzeff's *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (1941), and P. M. Fraser's scarcely less magisterial *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (1973), a unique work which the Oxford University Press, for perverse reasons known to itself, has allowed to go out of print, apparently for ever. Those general studies as exist (eg. those by Ferguson, Peters, Bradford Welles, or Tam, and Griffith), though full of useful material on a variety of topics, tend to be selective, chronological in organization, and, worse, confusing.

This fault is especially apparent in the (for the most part very inadequate) attempts to deal with the admittedly complex political evolution and relationships of the Successor Kingdoms. Tam, and Griffith offer a brief summary, but this is so concentrated as to be virtually incomprehensible to the layman for whom it is intended. Others largely ignore the political history as such, and concentrate rather on broad general topics: one senses the malign impression that the Hellenistic age was a static, consistent epoch during which no changes of real significance took place in the *polity*. Such a narrative as we do get is chopped up for the sake of tidiness, between the various individual Kingdoms: Ptolemaic, Attalid, Seleucid, Antigonid and the rest; the result is a kaleidoscopic mess, full of bewildering cross-references and repetitions.

Rostovtzeff (as, for instance, in other things) was always acutely conscious that the Hellenistic world must be treated as an independent entity, not as a mere appendix to the classical world, and studied in evolutionary

tens. This ideal seems to have been lost sight of in the English-speaking countries. We have nothing remotely comparable either to Edouard Will's *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique* (1966, 1979) or to Claire Préaux's *Le monde hellénistique* (1978) for comprehensiveness, comprehensibility and detailed documentation. Yet even in these excellent French scholars the approach is still more fragmented than one would like; at times (and more often as time goes on) I find myself turning back, with immense relief, to the old-fashioned (ie. chronologically planned, and paginally footnoted) narrative of Benedictus Niese's *Geschichte der griechischen und makedonischen Staaten seit der Schlacht bei Chaeroneia* (1893-1903), a work which may need updating in the light of new epigraphical and papyrological evidence, but is not nearly so far gone in obsolescence as some modern scholars would have us believe. Three fat volumes of clarity, sanity and respect for *testimonia*: those were the days.

F. W. Walbank's *The Hellenistic World*, then, comes at the right time, and has a very visible gap to fill. I opened it with high hopes: its author has no doubt Polybius his life's work, and, like Niese, has produced on him (also, as it happens, in three fat volumes) a work of equal clarity, sanity, and respect for *testimonia*, among the best and (I would judge) most durable commentaries of the century. There is much in *The Hellenistic World* that arouses similar respect. Walbank's erudition is predictably wide as well as deep; his mastery of the essential documents assured: he quotes, frequently and with telling effect, from sources literary and non-literary, many of the latter little-known. He is also commendably up-to-date on many vexed questions of interpretation, and it is perhaps as a *résumé* of current scholarly thinking that *The Hellenistic Age* has most value for the student.

Walbank is clear and perceptive on the "shifting and uneasy relationship between the Greco-Macedonian ruling class and the native populations"; he is not over-awed by the residual propaganda about the supposed Hellenizing mission of Macedonian veterans or Greek traders and bureaucrats. He knows that the gymnasiums, theatres, temples and other evidence of Hellenism which crop up in the far reaches of the Seleucid empire were primarily for the benefit of the expatriate ruling class - ancient equivalents of the European Club in British India or the American PX, perquisites of the ethnocentric enclave. Economically, Walbank is also up to date: he presents the Ptolemaic system as a "large-scale experiment in bureaucratic centralism and in mercantilism", concerned more to prevent cheating than to secure the most efficient results; he reminds us that the Hellenistic era "was not characterized by any substantial transformation of the forces of production" and he trots out all the currently favoured answers to the perennial question, "Why is the Greek view of the possibilities open to technology so restricted?", from cheap labour to technical incompetence, from conservatism of investment to social contempt for the banalities.

So far so good, and Walbank has a great deal of value to offer. The trouble is that much of it will only (as so often with such books) be of real use to those who know something about the subject already; like so many experts, Walbank cannot always quite visualize what, for the layman, will be baffling, what a truism. He is also, exceedingly dry, which the regrettable brevity of the paper used by Fontana seems to reinforce in equal greyness of mind. It is, of course, hard to compress a complex subject without sounding either aphoristic or impenetrable, and Walbank obviously finds aphorisms suspect. What, for instance, were the stakes at stake in Rome's showdown with Antiochus III (192-188)? John Briscoe, in the latest volume of his *Commentary on the later books of Livy*, offers, to just over three pages, a clear analysis. Antiochus wanted to reconstitute the

Seleucid empire as it had stood at the death of Seleucus I, complete with a European toe-hold beyond the Bosphorus. He had no plans to conquer all Greece, much less invade Italy; that did not stop him standing up for his supposed "ancestral rights" in Thrace, Rome, with the examples of Pyrrhus and Hannibal to mull over) tended to over-react to supposed threats from the East, as from Africa, but had no original intentions of destroying the Seleucid empire. As Badian long ago argued (a view



A clay bust of Persephone from Syracuse, early third century. From Morgantown Studies, Volume 1. The Terra-cottas by Malcolm Bell (226pp with 150 plates. Princeton University Press. £38.70. 0 691 03946 1)

Apostasy and after

By Averil Cameron

POLYMNIA ATHANASSIADI-POWDERN:
Julian and Hellenism
An Intellectual Biography
245pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £17.50.
0 19 814846 1

For some of his contemporaries, and for generations of modern scholars before and after Gibbon, the Emperor Julian has represented the essence of the "conflict" between Christianity and paganism. Two fourth-century emperors - Constantine, the first Christian ruler of the Roman Empire, and Julian, born into the Christian imperial family, who not only apostatized from Christianity but tried to bring back a paganism revamped along Christian lines - seem all too easily to stand for the polarities of late antique religious thought. In fact, however, every aspect of Constantine's Christian progress from his "conversion" to his death-bed baptism is packed with ambiguities. As for Julian, he long maintained an outward Christianity, even when his own idiosyncratic ideas were well developed. Nor was he above writing a slyish panegyric to the hated Emperor Constantius (the son of Constantine), and when Constantine died and Julian succeeded he led the funeral procession to Constantine's church of the Holy Apostles in Christian Constantinople.

The effect of recent scholarship has been to whittle down the evidence of struggle and conflict between late antique paganism and Christianity. It is now difficult, for instance, to write of a "pagan revival" at the end of the fourth century, and in general acculturation is coming to way of understanding. Christian/pagan relations. Obviously Julian is a type for re-examination in this light, even though there have already been two very recent biographies in English by G. W. Bowersock and Robert Browning. Polylnia Athanassiadi-Powder's differs from them in

unconvincingly challenged by Briscoe) the two sides lurched into war without really meaning to, by a series of accidents. It would be hard to deduce any of this from the ultra-brief reference by Walbank (p. 237): I was left, as so often, with the feeling that this text, especially on historical events, was more Delphic than mere considerations of space required.

This is partly the fault of the book's arrangement. Walbank begins well enough, with a crisp run-down on the sources, a glance at Alexander's career and subsequent influence, and a chapter on the chaotic period 323-301, during which Alexander's marshals, such as Ptolemy, Seleucus, and Antiochus One-Eye, manoeuvred and fought over the spoils of empire. But after Ipsus (301) he abandons his chronological survey altogether, and only picks it up again, somewhat haphazardly, to describe Rome's intervention in the Balkans. Thus the crucial third century is not viewed in evolutionary terms at all: the reader is forced to piece the period together as well as he can from random, and at times repetitive, scraps of historical information flung out *en passant* during a series of general chapters on Ptolemy, Seleucus, and the Greco-Macedonian homeland. Students on whom tried the text as an experiment reported severe confusion. There are also brisk surveys of religion, exploration and geography, and a chapter headed "Inter-city contacts and federal states" that seems to have strayed out of some more specialized monograph; and a section on "Cultural Developments" that whips through philosophy, science and technology in one quick conducted

tour after devoting half of a concluding paragraph to literature.

What does the concerned reader really want, in the last resort, from such a study as this? Some kind of interpretative overview, I would think, tentative answers to large-scale questions. Walbank does, as I suggest above, come up with some of the current theories, and this is useful; but I was struck throughout by the phenomenon he seems to take for granted. Why did philosophers reverse the fifth-century credo of political involvement in order to pursue ataraxia, private freedom from worry? How much will an unglorified phrase like "the diatribes of the wandering Cynics" mean to a non-classicist, and is there not a danger that the uninformed will take both "dianthe" and "Cynic" in the wrong sense? Why did an increasing emphasis on Ptolemaic ruler-worship mirror "a decline in their real power and in their independence vis-à-vis the native priesthood"? What brought about the "admission of political and perhaps spiritual helplessness" that Walbank detects behind that notorious Athenian hymn to Demeter, or are we to hear, or don't we exist, or are indolent gods are far away, or cannot see you, but you are present, or stone, but for real: so to you we pray? This last question Walbank partially answers - three pages later - with a reference to the reduced power of the city-states and the decline in rationalism; but the connection would be less than clear to someone who was not already prepared for it. This is a useful interim report, but not the *vue d'ensemble* we need, much less a textbook for beginners. The field is still wide open.

In concentrating on the development of Julian's ideas, for which, as a Greek himself, she prefers the term "Hellenism" to "paganism". For all that, it is still a biography. Curiously, Julian would have approved of that. He knew the importance of personality in history and political life, above all in the case of his relative Constantine (he was the son of Constantine's half-brother), and his own life could be presented as the projection of a deeply individual personality. More than that, Julian is almost the only figure in the ancient world (with the exception of Augustine) of whom a plausible biography can be written - and it is no accident that both belong to the fourth century. But the odd works in which Julian castigated Constantine, lampooned the Christians and declared himself against the unpopularity which his own actions had caused at Antioch, and his generally provocative and attention-seeking behaviour, made it hard even though Julian's "Hellenism" was a strange animal, not only in the mind of Julian, but also in that of the author. Somehow, she feels, it represented the spirit and essence of Hellenism, whereas the Byzantines (some of whom certainly thought that they were preserving something real) exchanged the spirit for the letter. That there are value-judgments implicit here emerges, for example, in Dr Athanassiadi-Powder's view of Neoplatonism as "Greek in essence", standing for "intellectual freedom as against the 'statistic' dogmatism of the East". On the other hand, Julian's *Against the Galileans* implied, in the Semitic world,

Patronage and the pursuit of glory

By Stuart Hampshire

HAROLD BALDRY:

The Case For The Arts
173pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95
(paperback, £2.95).
0 436 03191 4

It is strange that the case for generous national subsidy of the arts has to be stated over and over again in Britain, while it is generally taken for granted in France and Germany particularly in respect of music, theatre and the visual arts. A number of historical reasons can be offered. The most obvious is the longer persistence of Court patronage in Europe, which in Britain was interrupted by the Civil War and the advent of the Puritans. In the last century, only the Prince Consort among the statesmen of the time actively promoted the national collections and shared a European sense of national responsibility for endowment of the arts. At this stage it is tedious to return to one more rehearsal of the arguments, as if we were back with the "bold experiments" of CEMA, W. E. Williams and Maynard Keynes, or even further back, with the endowment of the British Museum and the National Gallery. With evident sincerity and quiet reasonableness Harold Baldry traverses familiar ground; but it is possible that, because he is mild and tentative in argument, he will not convince many of those angry men who resent, disapprove of, or are made nervous by, the government's aid to the Arts through the Arts Council.

A strong brew of different, sometimes contrary, motives come into play and prompt the angry taxpayer to articulate his complaint: distrust and resentment of the apparent élite who are members of the Arts Council; distrust of patronage of any kind, unless it is exercised by individuals or commercial firms; a belief that the liberal arts, unlike the sciences and applied arts, are decorative and not useful in ordinary lives, and that they are a kind of luxury; the irritation felt by popular performers, artists and writers, who have done well in the open market, that others should not be exposed to the same competition and should actually be admired, although they have not earned admiration in the hard way; lastly, a populist feeling that opera and ballet and productions at the National Theatre contribute to a high culture, which is largely the possession of well educated and successful members of the middle class, and that it is of little interest to a majority who are also contributing through their taxes.

In meeting these different resentments and hostilities there is no point in denying, first, that the arts in general, and the most fully developed forms, do actually engage the strong interest only of a minority, and not a cross-section of the whole population. This will probably remain true for a long time in the future, even though the minority is a

large and growing one. Secondly, there is no point in denying that much of the Arts Council's total grant must be applied to the national companies, opera, ballet, theatre, based in London, and that many of the seats at their performances are beyond the reach of many taxpayers, and will long remain so, in spite of the subsidy. Particularly opera, but also ballet, are irreducibly money-consuming arts. From their beginnings they were a form of conspicuous consumption; neither of them can be made very widely accessible in the theatre without either dilution of quality or unmanageable levels of subsidy.

It follows that the ordinary criteria of just and equitable distribution of taxpayers' money will not be satisfied in subsidizing the arts. The arts, like sports and games, are fundamentally and of their nature inequitable, and equity is a concept inapplicable to them. The distribution of talent is capricious and unfair, the appearance of genius is random and unpredictable. The virtuous and well-intentioned do not generally prosper in the arts of imagination, and the great innovators are often spoiled or withdrawn as persons and citizens, often not easily in touch with the warm hearts of their fellow citizens, or with the main flow of contemporary interests.

As in games and sports, there is a painfully clear, unavoidable distinction between the true élite and the luck of more or less competent practitioners. Because of the waywardness of the imagination - as distinct from the discipline and technique which are its necessary supports - the difference is even sharper and clearer in the arts than in sports. The benefits of imagination are not earned or deserved and are not methodically acquired, even though the path to them is usually through hard work, example and imitation. Hard work is never sufficient and not always necessary in all the arts, since there is such a thing as the facility of genius, even if it is rare. The importance of being earnest was written in a fortnight and is likely to live forever. Virtually nothing is known, or is likely to be known, about the conditions that favour the development of high talent in the imaginative arts, or the sudden appearance of genius. The subsidizing authorities cannot therefore plan their support in any very controlled and rational way. They can only follow the fallible method of taking past achievements of individuals as evidence of likely future achievements, without the guidance of theory.

Given that subsidy of the arts through the Arts Council must come up against all these admitted limitations and difficulties, what justification can be offered for continuing the subsidy at the present level or even for substantially increasing it? If equity cannot be achieved in this

particular distribution of public funds, what important ends can be achieved and what criteria in principle should be applied? The first end to be achieved is public subsidy of the arts is glory, specifically national glory, and as a second and derivative end, a secure place in the minds of later generations, looking back, to the achievements representative of our time.

Glory is now not the most widely used and familiar of moral categories, and its importance is not often admitted by moral theorists, who may find it undemocratic and embarrassing. But it is not an obscure notion and not a vague one. In the history of a nation there occur occasionally mute and inglorious periods in which virtually nothing is contributed to the arts and the national heritage in most of its forms languishes: forgotten, silent centuries or decades slip by, which must have had their conflicts of passion and the moments of high imagination, all now turned to dust and without testimony or witness. In contrast there are the full and noisy and productive decades, in which the performing arts flourish, and literature and painting and music come alive, as it seems, and move into the centre of national consciousness. These are the periods which historians like to dwell upon, and which form traditions. Everyone, both proud and also more generally happy to participate in a present which they know will pass securely into history.

I do not claim that government money is either a necessary or a sufficient condition of a period of invention and of glory in the arts. It is only an aid, a prop when some expensive splendour is needed, but also and perhaps no less important, it is a perceptible means of general participation in the national glory. There is another aspect to glory. In its connection with the arts and with artists, the encouragement that the imaginative arts give in rendering existence endurable is in part due to the stretching of our ideas of possible human achievement which a good artist can suggest to us. A great opera singer, a great dancer like Nureyev or Fonteyn, or great actors, carry with them a certain glory, a splendid feat, an individual's triumph, a fit subject for public adoration. As the besetting evil of aristocratic rule is servility and dependence, and the besetting evil of socialist rule is coercion, so the evil of democratic rule (admittedly a lesser one) is the reinforcement of mediocrity. That is why the outcry against élites, heard again recently and in connection with the Arts Council, is alarming; it suggests to followers of John Stuart Mill, and the admirers of Tocqueville, to rally to the defence of the Council. Obviously the proprietors and editors of the popular national newspapers, and the purveyors of mass entertainment, have an interest in creating a

homogenized mass market which will reliably consume their products; market research and past experience tell them what kind of products constantly have the widest appeal. They are naturally unfriendly to innovatory minorities who may in aggregate disturb the mass market and subvert some of the potential audience, leading them to higher things. Thus every year, as the Arts Council issues its report and the question of the grant comes up again, there are well-timed stories of eccentric and fashionable enterprises unwillingly supported by the virtuous, plain taxpayer, balls of air in the Tate, displays of sex at the National Theatre, and Arts Associations in the far regions sponsoring strange and sometimes subversive festivals.

The fact is that much the largest part of the Arts Council's grant always goes to the national companies: Covent Garden, the English National Opera, the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Another large percentage of the grant goes to other conventional theatres and to orchestras, and other performers of old and respected music. There is a constant weight of commitment to traditional and well-established aesthetic values built into the principles that govern the Council's distributions. The expensive arts are principally the performing arts attached to a repertoire which is only lightly touched at its fringes by the deplored pretensions of the avant-garde. Little reviews, contemporary sculptors and painters, artists in residence at universities, contemporary music, and the so-called performance arts, are, even in aggregate, a small element in the Council's budget. It is unfair that journalists and popular novelists should base their objections to taxpayers' subsidy of the arts, and to the Arts Council, on the Council's relation to the contemporary avant-garde and to experiment in the visual arts and, to some degree, also in literature; this relation is far from the centre of its activities.

It is mean and not accurate, I think, to state or to imply that the panels advising the Arts Council by their decisions influence and twist the ambitions of painters and writers: as if a person might paint or write in a certain way with a view to attracting a grant. This is suggested from time to time. The truth is that even some of the more famous, well-established contemporary poets and novelists turn to the Arts Council when they find that they cannot earn enough by journalism or by working for a publisher, or by other tolerable means, and at the same time work affectively on their next book. It is not obscure and experimental writers, unable to attract readers, who absorb most of the very small sums of money available for individual writers and artists.

State subsidy of the arts is not finally to be defended by social-political arguments or as an aid to education. Even if we were not en-



"Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" 1906, a watercolor by Maxwell Ashby Arncliffe. The picture can be seen in an exhibition of British Drawings and Watercolours, 1890-1940, at the Anthony d'Offay Gallery, 9 Dering Street, New Bond Street, London W.1, until March 6.

tering the age of enforced leisure, the case for subsidy would be decisive for intrinsic reasons, and apart from education, it is possible that David Jones, the author of *In Parenthesis*, will be remembered and read long after the contemporary equivalents of W. J. Locke and A. S. M. Hutchinson, successful in the market place - not to be named but easily identified - are forgotten and unread. Anyone who knew David Jones knows that he could not be deflected from his path by any external agency, and least of all by an Arts Council grant. There was a definite glory in his achievement, both as writer and artist. Not only readers of the *Times Literary Supplement*, but any newspaper reader will remember, and some will actually read or otherwise allude to, a large number of writers and artists of, say, the 1880s, long after they have forgotten the names and characters of the Foreign Secretaries or other statesmen of the decade, or of any other long past decade. Glory, unlike mere success or fame, lives on in the individual's mind and in national consciousness: it is the natural reward of athletes and heroic soldiers in battle, and most of all, of artists and of poets and of composers.

A nation that is unwilling to give solid material encouragement and support to the probable sources of its glory will have a dispirited, nameless history, a dim existence on the margin of things. It still seems to me odd that almost any Frenchman is ready to acknowledge this truism, and very few Englishmen; perhaps it is because puritan ethics, which originally included hostility to the Court, and its ways, survives as hostility to all rewards that are not earned through merchandise sold in the market.

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The manipulation game

By Cyril Ehrlich

ROBERT H. BATES
Markets and States in Tropical Africa
The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies
178pp. University of California Press. £19.50.
0 520 04253 0

Manipulating markets against the public interest is a universal sport: airline fares and car prices are familiar European examples. In tropical Africa the game is rougher. Governments are its leading exponents; peasant farmers, ie. most citizens, are their immediate victims; social and economic corrosion is the ultimate outcome. Agricultural economies now have to waste scarce foreign currency on imports of food. Export staples - cotton, coffee and cocoa - which once led economic growth are forced into decline. Nobody benefits, except for a privileged, rapacious few. Why, asks Robert H. Bates, "should reasonable men adopt public policies that have harmful consequences for the societies they govern?" Such euphemism is a momentary aberration in a book which generally avoids fashionable straggles of tact, and honestly attempts to anatomize "kleptocracy", a term not used by Bates, but singularly apt.

The trouble began with a muddled desire to regulate agriculture, both for its own good and to provide resources for industrialization which, it was assumed, would raise living standards. Machinery, procedures and mythology were handed down by colonial masters ignorant and distrustful of free markets. Long before African countries became independent there were measures to eliminate competition among buyers of produce, allegedly in the interest of those it most benefited, the peasant farmers. Monopoly and vested interest were supported, usually in the name of "rationalization" and "development". Marketing boards were established, paying prices well below market levels, in pursuit of undefined

and soon-forgotten "stabilization", their profits to be dissipated in bureaucratic excess, again called "development". In colonial days strict rules and administrative integrity. Subsequent modifications and depredation are described in the present book. Statistical tables show how much has been taken from farmers, and there are nice examples of how the money has been spent, notably in Ghana: the risible Esiama Oil Mill; the Cocoa Marketing Board's drink bill of one million cedi, between August 1977 and July 1978, to "boost the morale of the directors", and so forth.

But the author is more concerned with analysis than exposure. His schematic approach is illuminating, though it sacrifices any attempt at coherent chronology. Nor, despite a good bibliography, does he always make adequate acknowledgment to his predecessors, particularly Peter Bauer, whose seminal writings on the economics of marketing reform and the politicization of African economic life span three decades, and were uniquely prescient. The pivot of Bates's argument is that agricultural policies are politically derived. While the approach to industry embodies a certain trade autonomy, achieving little but entrenched monopoly and inefficiency, agricultural policies are essentially devised to cope with the exigencies of urban politics. Cheap food must be procured for town workers (and, he might have added, for the army) if the next coup is to be averted. Foreign exchange rates are therefore manipulated, to lower the price of imported food; domestic food prices are controlled, and various projects launched. Little is accomplished. Attempts to regulate internal food markets, in contrast with export crops which can be easily muted, are inevitably thwarted by the farmer's natural resistance. The history of direct intervention is even more miserable, absorbing huge resources into state farms and like, without benefit except to "the fortunate few who gain access to them". Fertilizers, seeds and credit are subsidized, ostensibly to encourage progressive farmers; but in practice

such resources are channelled to those whose support is politically useful or economically rewarding to the state. While governments there gain a few rural allies, the basic conflict between agrarian and rural interests remains "an inherent part of the development process".

Are these burdens upon agriculture best regarded as necessary costs of transition towards the pattern of industrial progress exemplified by, say, Singapore? Bates regards them as possibly necessary but certainly insufficient. Successful industrialization would require much else, including active exploitation of a large market. Only Nigeria offers possibilities in this direction; elsewhere current policies are less a prelude to growth than a framework for stagnation. Governments "get away with it" by coercion, and because farmers retaliate through the market, doing official distributive channels, or growing alternative crops. Pleas at their resilience is tempered by the realization that they are being forced into costly second-best alternatives. Thus Tanzania's food crisis of the mid 1970s was probably caused by a potent mixture of drought, "villagization", and the fixing of prices at their equilibrium level.

The euphoria of independence has inevitably given way to "african cynicism". As open resistance is crushed, only minor adjustments to the prevailing political system are allowed. Bates attempts to end on a positive note by offering alternative "scenarios". These consist largely of projected coalitions between the various groups, further juggling with exchange rates, and, above all, real incentives for farmers. Any suggestion that governments might simply stop meddling is "naturally ignored by policymakers as hopelessly naive". Why? The performance of manifestly incompetent and unstable regimes might well be improved if they tried to do less, and laissez-faire is one of the few elixirs left in the vishing expert's dispensary. But "alternative futures" occupy only four pages of this serious, worthy book which is commendably free from the obscurantist jargon and conspiratorial ideology common to the genre.

Customary care

By Eva Gillies

ESTHER N. GOODY
Parenthood and Social Reproduction
Fostering and Occupational Roles in West Africa
350pp. Cambridge University Press.
£25.
0 521 22721 6

A Ghanaian nine-year-old, fostered nearly all her life by an English professional family to Surrey while her own parents pursued their studies was, in 1972, consigned by an English judge to the care of her foster-parents until she reached the age of eighteen. The Ghanaian mother and father, themselves middle-class, were shocked and indignant: in their society, sending a child out to be fostered was (and is) a perfectly acceptable thing to do, not thought of as in any sense heartless or harmful to the child and in no way affecting the parents' rights.

Like other West Africans in London, they were simply adapting to an old and widespread custom to their new circumstances. Among the Ghanaians and Kpembes of northern Ghana, children are sent to provide company and household help to a mother's mother, mother's sister or father's sister; Dagomba chiefs' sons were traditionally brought up by titled chiefs; their daughters by the chief's sisters - while commoners sent their own children to the chiefs' households to become his pages or his married wards. Muslims of many different tribes send their sons to live with a *mallam*, to serve him and

benefit by his religious instruction. In the economically and occupationally more differentiated Hausa and Kanuri kingdoms, the apprenticeship fostering of boys has long been widely practised, while girls are often sent as childless secluded kinswomen whose own trade requires a go-between with the outside world. More modern types of apprenticeship in southern Nigeria and Ghana; traditional debt peonship among the Yoruba and other peoples; Creole wardship in Sierra Leone; these are only a few instances from an open set of similar phenomena. Each type of fosterage is, within its own social context, susceptible of a locally appropriate "functional" explanation. The puzzle is whether they can all be fitted into a single analytical framework.

The fact that Dr Goody has to a large extent achieved this is greatly to her credit; the more so as the ethnographic material she uses is as varied as the institutions it describes. Traditional Hausa society comes into close focus through the eyes of our old friend Baba of Kari; so, in a different way, do the Kpembe children studied by the author herself. Elsewhere, surveys, articles and monographs inevitably differ in scope, depth and style of presentation. Dr Goody dissects parental roles to yield an elegant diagram which can be interpreted in terms of transaction theory and the compartmentalized social context in which these roles must be filled. Strong implicit descent groups, it seems, do not encourage fostering where, in

the presence of centralized government, kin groups become looser and weaker, the exchange of children can work (like cross-cousin marriage elsewhere) to strengthen endangered ties; as society becomes economically and occupationally more differentiated, parental tuition may (especially for boys) no longer be adequate, and children are placed increasingly with unrelated foster-parents who can train them for new occupations and life-styles.

The neat transaction-theory model is here embedded in an argument whose whole intellectual style harks back to a much older conception of anthropology. Clearly, comparative studies are coming back into fashion. This is in itself an excellent thing, with so much good information now available, it is probably time to stand back a little from the detailed ethnographic work and try for a more general picture of a given institution, at least in a particular area, as is here done for child fosterage in West Africa. But there is a danger this sort of comparison seems all too easily to arrange its terms along an unperceived time dimension. Dr Goody speaks of a "very long-term progression from agallatran segmentary societies through simple states to more complex hierarchical states based on trade and an elaborate division of labour", and of fosterage as being more or less "adaptive" in different circumstances. This seems no longer to be the language of transaction theory, but of Darwinian evolution. The whirligig of time brings in his revenges: is social evolution coming back into fashion too? If so, perhaps it should be made rather more explicit.

Flood and low water

By Roland Oliver

ROBERT W. HARMS
River of Wealth, River of Sorrow
277pp. Yale University Press. £16.80.
0 300 02616 1

As any air traveller today can see, the West African land is full of people, whereas that of the Congo basin is almost empty. The roads of southern West Africa lead from town to town, with apparently little but trees in between, but the view from overhead shows how much of the total area has in fact been cleared for agriculture, and how many quite large settlements are concealed behind thin screens of forest verdure. In contrast, the waterways of the Congo system can show in places an almost continuous succession of riverside villages which are seen from the air to have only vast expanses of uncleared forest behind them. The modern country of Zaïre, formerly the Belgian Congo, consists in fact of a very lightly inhabited central basin, with most of the population grouped around the rim. Within the basin, the people live mostly beside the rivers, and their livelihood comes mostly from fishing. Until the advent of the river steamer, however, the fishermen were also the carriers and traders, and some of them operated over surprisingly long stretches of the inland waterway system.

Robert Harms's book is about the riverside people called the Bobangi, who live some five to six hundred miles up the Congo, between the confluences of its two largest tributaries, the Ubangi descending from the north and the Kasai from the south-east. This is a particularly strategic situation for river communications, commanding the only stretch of waterway common to the main routes from north to south and west to east. It is

not surprising that, of all the forest peoples, the Bobangi should have become the great specialists of the long-distance trade of the river. Harms, an academic historian from Wisconsin and more recently from Yale, lived among the Bobangi for nearly two years, making his base at Bolobo, and travelling from settlement to settlement in his own thirty-foot, mahogany dug-out canoe. His main concession to modernity was a six-horsepower outboard motor, which saved him the services of ten to twenty paddlers. Owing to the strained political relations between Zaïre and the Congo Republic, his travels were confined to the Zaïre side of the *thalweg*, but most of his informants knew both sides of the river and certainly his accompanying archival researches covered French as well as Belgian colonial records, and those of the Spiritan missionaries of the Congo Republic as well as those of the Baptists of Zaïre.

Fishing is often considered to be a sedentary occupation, but on this stretch of river it follows a seasonal mobility akin to pastoral transhumance. The Congo and the Ubangi between them make two periods of flood and two intervening periods of low water. The fish and the fishermen dispose themselves accordingly. At low water the fishermen leave the villages and camp on sandbanks and islands which are submerged during the flood. With the rising flood, fish move in to feed on the submerged vegetation of banks and islands exposed during the dry season. At high flood the island and shoreline camps must be abandoned and the fishermen return to the permanent villages situated on bluffs of high ground, to live on the dried proceeds of their catch and to trade the surplus for root-crops grown away from the river banks in forest clearings. The fishing way of life thus provided the perfect training for the long-distance river trade of pre-colonial times. Trading parties differed from fishing parties

in that they travelled further afield, and in larger numbers for reasons of security. They built temporary camps as relay stations, and fished as they went. Fishing canoes were enlarged to provide additional carrying capacity, and the number of paddlers was increased for speed and defence. Above all, the network of human contacts was expanded by blood brotherhood and inter-tribal marriage, so that trading journeys could be extended far beyond the range of purely fishing expeditions. At the high period of this system, from the late eighteenth until the late nineteenth century, Bobangi traders were active from the northern margins of the forest around modern Bangui to the Stanley Pool (now Lake Malebo), whence land routes led through the edges of the southern savanna to the Congo estuary, avoiding the cataract region of the lower river.

Among the commodities of the long-distance canoe traffic Harms concentrates, probably excessively, on slaves and ivory. He thus presents the commercial development of the Bobangi almost entirely as a response to the stimulus of the European sea-borne trade of the Atlantic coast. He sees it beginning during the early sixteenth century, when the Portuguese were trading actively through the kingdom of Kongo, with slave markets situated on the shores of the Stanley Pool. He sees it growing substantially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in response to the Dutch development of the slave trade from the Loango coast, north of the Congo estuary. He sees the export trade in slaves passing its peak during the early nineteenth century and thereafter being replaced by the ivory trade, thanks to which the Bobangi were able still further to increase their wealth and power until the river steamers and the commercial monopoly of the Congo Independent State put them suddenly out of business in the 1890s.

From such beginnings, the Bobangi were well placed to respond to the stimulus of intercontinental trade when that came their way. The number of slaves sold at the Loango coast reached three thousand a year during the later seventeenth century and six thousand by the end of the eighteenth. It is thought that perhaps ten thousand of these slaves had been brought down the northern tributaries of the Congo by the Bobangi. If this is so, about fifty large canoes would have been needed, each manned by a crew of fifty to sixty men, who would be absent from home for three to five months on each expedition. The canoes

would carry other merchandise, but slaves had to be fed both on the voyage and while awaiting resale. For an ethnic group numbering perhaps thirty or forty thousand in all to bundle as middlemen a thousand slaves a year would have been a considerable effort, and one which could only have been achieved by a process of slow increase, involving a substantial transformation of the Bobangi society as a whole.

As Harms shows very clearly from his evidence obtained by interview, the first consequence of becoming a slave-trading society was the need to absorb still more slaves into the home population. The successful entrepreneur among the Bobangi was the proprietor of one or more large canoes (each the product of nine months' specialized labour) who also numbered among his household enough trusted slaves to provide half the crew. The remaining half could be found among poor relations, who would wield a paddle in exchange for a certain amount of cargo space for their own petty commercial ventures. The trusted slave acquired status through being offered some of the privileges of free men, and through the prospect of obtaining more by the willing exercise of energy and intelligence. The less trusted slave was left to perform the dirtiest chores of the home village, with the prospect of being literally sold down the river if he failed to give satisfaction. The lineage system of the old fishing society had thus been transformed into a collection of family firms or "houses" similar to those of the lagoons and waterways around the Bight of Benin. It was a situation in which half of those who spoke Bobangi were out so in any genetic sense, and in which the important marriages were those which cemented the alliances between Bobangi and non-Bobangi commercial houses up and down the river. In the 1840s slaves gradually

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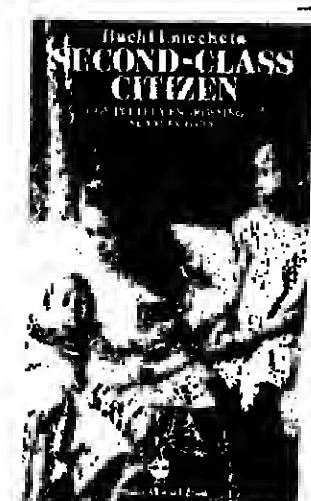
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ceased to be exportable across the Atlantic and their price fell drastically. Very likely, this was the real turning point in the social history of the Bobangi and the other riverine tribes of the central Congo basin. The supply of surplus slaves for export had been steadily increasing for two hundred years, and it did not suddenly cease when the bottom dropped out of the market. The import from the outside world to which the Bobangi had become accustomed - textiles, metal bars and manufactured hardware - could still be maintained by switching from the export of slaves to that of ivory, which the price rose steadily through the middle years of the nineteenth century. This drew in a new set of primary producers in the shape of the pygmy hunters of the watershed

Territorial imperative

By Michael Crowder

JEREMY WHITE:
Central Administration in Nigeria, 1914-1948
The Problem of Polarity
Foreword by Adebayo Adedeji
369pp. Frank Cass/Dublin: Irish Academic Press. £17.50.
0 7146 3184 1 (Frank Cass)
0 7165 0057 4 (Irish Academic Press)

OYELEYE OYEDIRAN (Editor):
The Nigerian 1979 Elections
195pp. Meemillan. £15 (paperback, 25.95).
0 333 31785 8

When Sylvia Leith-Ross called out to Nigeria with her husband on the Elder Dempster mailboat in 1907, she found that the purser never placed officials travelling to Northern Nigeria at the same table as those going to Southern Nigeria. As the wife of a "northerner", she recalled, "we somehow took for granted that all Southern officials were rather fat, rather flabby and that they started drinking at six o'clock while we never started before six-thirty."

In 1912 Sir Frederick Lugard, conqueror and High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria from 1906 to 1912, was given the task of amalgamating it with the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The two Nigerians were finally joined as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria on January 1, 1914. But the boundary between the Northern and Southern Provinces, as the former protectorates were now known, remained as rigid under Lugard's scheme of amalgamation as it had appeared to Sylvia Leith-Ross. It was a boundary that was to prove the major stumbling block to the creation of a united Nigeria for the next half-century. When finally it was abolished in 1967 with the division of Nigeria into twelve states, the damage had been done: independent Nigeria was plunged into a civil war in which the antagonisms engendered through the British division of the colony were an important factor.

Would that civil war have taken place, asks Jeremy White, in this admirable study, had the British divided up the country differently in 1914? Certainly, alternative plans for the organization of Nigeria into four or more regions were put forward, which Lugard was considering the amalgamation. And the focus of White's carefully researched and balanced volume is the successful resistance between 1914 and 1944 by the British "northerners" to all attempts by Lugard's successors to make his amalgamation more than nominal. As far as Lugard was concerned amalgamation had meant the imposition of the system of indirect rule as developed in Northern Nigeria on the southern provinces and with it the concomitant of direct taxation. Apart from rationalizing the communications of the country and introducing a uniform legal system, he was content for the two former provinces to retain a great deal of autonomy. He had, as Governor-General, a secretary in Nigeria, but he had no assistant in the Colonial Office. It was he who paved the way

French Congo. While human sacrifices at the funeral of chiefs and other men had probably been an ancient feature of Bobangi society, as of so many others in this part of Africa, it was almost certainly during this period, when slaves were choiced and numerous, and when traders were turning into warlords, that funeral sacrifices reached the dimensions which so scandalized the Baptist missionaries of the 1880s that even King Leopold's regime appeared to them by comparison a merciful release.

Robert Harms has written a very remarkable book, and one which someone who knew almost nothing about pre-colonial Africa would find readable and absorbing. If it causes any hesitation to the professional historian, it will be on account of its weakness in chronological evidence.

for the constitution introduced by Sir Arthur Richards in 1944 that first brought north and south together in one legislature. But though the south was divided into east and west in 1939, the north remained intact despite the fact that once again suggestions for its division had been put forward. And the federation of Nigeria that became independent in 1960 was based on this tripartite division in which the Northern Region was both in area and population larger than the other two together. It was a recipe for disaster, whose making Jeremy White analyses skilfully. As a former administrative officer in the north, John Smith, admitted in 1968, the "strong regional loyalty of the expatriate civil service may perhaps have helped to institutionalize the sad relations between Nigerians in North and South."

Today, with Nigeria divided into nineteen states since 1967, the distinction between north and south has faded. How far this is so was put to the test at the Federal Elections of

The documented history of the West Central African coast does not extend deep enough into the past to make a clear fit with the traditional history of the Bobangi at any period earlier than the late eighteenth century. The Bobangi themselves preserve no deep genealogical evidence around which to articulate the memories of the past. Essentially, Harms's fieldwork provided information about the state of affairs on the eve of the colonial period, from more than a fairly convincing model of the course of development during the past five centuries. All the same, it is a model well worth the study, and one that should be considered in connection with other recent communities, such as those of the Niger drainage system.

1979 that marked the end of thirteen years of military rule. The politically monolithic north is no more, as *The Nigerian 1979 Elections*, edited by Oyeleye Oyediran, clearly shows. The NPN, the party which inherited the mantle of the Northern People's Congress, that had dominated the old Northern Region, controls the executives of only five out of the ten states carved out of it. Of the five parties qualified to contest the election four gained control of one or more state executive in the former Northern Region while one party alone gained all four state executives in the former Western Region. Of the three former regions, Oyediran shows that it was among the victors of the north that the factor of ethnicity in voting behaviour was lowest. And with the probability that Nigeria will be divided into even more states there is hope that the boundary between north and south entrenched by Lugard will be psychologically and cartographically a thing of the past.

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The growth of African publishing

By Peter Warwick

According to traditional Yoruba belief, Ife-Ife is the original home of mankind. In the beginning it was the hunting ground of the gods who descended to it from the sky by a spider's web. Oludumare, the Supreme Being, conceived of the idea of transforming its marshy wasteland into solid earth and summoned Orisa-nla, the arch-divinity, to accomplish the task with a small-shall filled with loose earth, a five-toed hen and a pigeon. Orisa-nla throw down the soil which was scattered and spread by the hen and the pigeon. Oludumare then sent a chamoleon to inspect that the work had been done. Later, trees were planted and the earth was peopled by an initial group of sixteen human beings.

It is at this place, Ife-Ife, in western Nigeria, that the seventh life international Book Fair opens on March 1, to become not only a meeting place for African and international publishers, but also a shop window for Nigeria's own publishing industry. In the words of Olayi Bolodeoku of the Nigerian Publishers Association, it is a gathering that serves "to assert an African identity in the world of books".

Africa's association with the world of literature and learning goes back many centuries, long before the first Europeans reached the continent's sub-Saharan shores. Ethiopia produced written works in its own languages even before the earliest literatures appeared in western Europe, in Celtic and Germanic languages. Timbuktu, in present-day Mali, was a prosperous commercial and cultural centre in the fifteenth century; its Sankore mosque served as a gathering place for Muslim scholars and writers, fulfilling a role equivalent to the universities of medieval Europe. Along the eastern coast of the continent Swahili narrative poetry dates back to the early eighteenth century.

Among the first African authors to

be published in Europe were three West Africans who had been enslaved and later managed to travel to England as servants. Ignatius Sancho's *Letters* were first published in 1782, two years after his death. Born on a slave ship and baptized in Cartagena, Sancho served as a butler in the Duchess of Montagu's household and later opened a grocery's shop in Westminster. By 1803 his correspondence had been published in five editions. Ottobah Cugoana published an anti-slavery tract in 1787, partly autobiographical and partly propagandist. Olaudah Equiano was the most successful writer of the three. He was born in Igboiland in eastern Nigeria, and was sold into slavery at the age of twelve. His autobiography, written when he was in his early forties, was published in London in 1789, and by 1794 there had been eight English editions and one American.

In Southern Africa local printing presses were established by missionaries in the first half of the nineteenth century at Lovedale in the eastern Cape and at Morija in Lesotho. Xhosa writers were contributing to the missionary journal *Ikwezi* (The Morning Star) in the mid-1840s. Thomas Mofolo's first Sesotho novel was published at Morija in 1907; his best-known work, *Chaka*, an historical novel dealing with the early nineteenth-century Zulu revolution, was completed in 1910, and eventually published in 1925. Sol T. Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*, a penetrating and moving indictment of the South African Land Act of 1913, was published in London in 1916; his historical novel, *Mhudi*, by the Lovedale Press in 1930.

Between 1850 and 1950 a tradition of writing, mainly though not exclusively in English and French, began to develop throughout the continent among members of the Western-educated and predominantly Christian

elite in African society. Writers and journalists of the time, working under conditions of alien political tutelage, showed concern in their publications for the pressing political and social questions of the day and also for recording and explaining their own indigenous culture. J. E. Casely Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911), Mofolo's *Chaka*, Plaatje's *Mhudi* and R. E. Obeng's *Eighteenth* (1943) were among early examples of the African novel. Alongside these various written works, a vigorous tradition of oral literature, its roots deep in African society and culture.

The starting point of contemporary African literature in English is generally taken to be the publication, by Faber in 1952, of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* by the Nigerian writer Amos Tutuola. In a major review in the *Observer*, Dylan Thomas found much to admire in its unconventional style, "terse and direct, wry, flat and savoury"; the book has never been widely acclaimed in Africa - one Ghanaian critic later remarked that Tutuola possessed little more than "a good imagination and bad grammar".

Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* was published by Heinemann in 1958, becoming the foundation stone in 1961 of the pioneering paperback African Writers Series, with Achebe as its first series editor. Something of a publishing gamble initially, the series has achieved considerable critical and commercial success and now runs to almost 250 titles. *Things Fall Apart* has sold over a million copies in its AWS edition, many of them for classroom use. The series has helped to draw out of the continent an impressive wealth of literary talent and brought the works of writers such as Achebe, Ngugi, Ousmane and Ekwensi to a wide reading public throughout the world.

The African Writers Series, largely because of its enormous success, has

attracted a good measure of criticism, not least from some of its own authors. "A neocolonial writers' coffee owned by Europeans and slyly nicknamed 'African'", Ayi Kwei Armah called it in 1978, though two of Armah's books have been published in the series since. Another consequence of its success, however, has been to give further encouragement to British international and indigenous publishers to promote African creative writing. Longman's new *Drumbeat* series, launched in 1979, is rapidly approaching publication of its fifteenth title. Though it still remains true, inevitably, that a Gambian poet, however talented, will find it more difficult to be accepted for publication than a Nigerian novelist, African writers today have more publishing opportunities than ever before.

Writers today also have a much larger and more heterogeneous potential readership in the continent as a result of population growth, the spread of literacy and extension of secondary and higher education. Writing for children has attracted the formidable talents of both Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta, while a number of young writers have turned to popular and teenage fiction and to writing for television. Literature in Africa has never had an exclusively elitist connotation, though the growth of popular fiction modelled on Western lines has been viewed with misgivings by some, fearing the emergence of a potentially unbridgeable gap between books for classroom study and books for feather-light entertainment, between the established works of African literature and spicy, fast-moving crime and romance stories.

The contributions of African authors in academic and educational publishing have been impressive, ranging from the works on tropical medicine written in the nineteenth century by the Sierra Leonean phys-

ician, Dr James Africanus Horton, to the Ibadan History Series begun in 1965 under the editorship of Professor K. O. Diko and subsequently edited by the author of the first book in the series, Professor J. F. Ade Ajayi, to the UNESCO *General History of Africa*, the first two volumes of which were published a year ago. There is a strong tradition in the continent of imparting knowledge and making scholarship accessible to students and relevant to the community, a tradition that received timely recognition when last year's Noma Award, an annual book prize designed to encourage the publication in Africa of works by African authors, was awarded to Professor Felix Adi for his book *Health Education for the Community*, published by Nwamife in Nigeria.

Compared to twenty years ago, or even ten years ago, the growth of publishing in Africa is one of the most remarkable features of the publishing landscape today. In Africa there are now about 500 publishing houses and research institutes with publishing programmes. African publishers face immense problems that to many might seem collectively insuperable: the small per capita income and diversity of languages of most African countries; the need for large sums of high-risk and initially low-yielding investment capital to launch a publishing company; the undeveloped nature of the printing industry in Black Africa; stern competition, especially in the educational book market; and Africa's poor transport and communications infrastructure and relatively small number of established retail outlets which conspire to make effective book distribution an enormous challenge.

Yet, in spite of these difficulties, African publishing in recent years has grown rapidly within the continent, as well as outside it. The 1982 life Book Fair will no doubt attest to its continuing vitality.

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Handing on loneliness

By Anne Duchêne

BARBARA PYM:
Un Usable Attachment
256pp. Macmillan. £6.95.
0 333 32654 7

This posthumously published novel carries the sad responsibility for driving Barbara Pym into a fifteen-year silence. In 1963, when she was fifty, she sent it to Jonathan Cape, who had published her six previous novels and it was turned down. (Turned down by Turner, too, and fairly wisely, as unlikely to sell: a view which, as Philip Larkin says in his Foreword to the book, might have been more gently delivered over luncheon.) When two other publishers also rejected it, she retired wounded and bewildered until she was thwarted out, as it were, in 1977, when Lord David Cecil and Philip Larkin, solicited by an enquiry in the TLS, both named her as the most underrated writer of this century. There was not time for her to produce much more, though, before her death in 1980; and the "few green leaves" of that period are nipped by a frost not found in her first brave comedies.

Mr Larkin loyally puts *An Usable Attachment* alongside the earlier

novels because of its "undiminished high spirits", but he is cheating a little here. The "high spirits" of all Pym novels, after all, are applied to very acute studies in loneliness: a quite specialized form of loneliness, held stoutly at bay by all the stations of the Anglican calendar, and by all the small, determined pleasures of egocentric gentility. Presumably William Plomer and Daniel George, who read the novel for Cape and rejected it, did not do so because in the heady atmosphere of 1963 such charms seemed dowdy and outdated. Presumably they thought - as Mr Larkin also concedes - that the book lacked a central coherence, in that the two protagonists of its "unsuitable attachment" are its least vigorous and convincing components.

All the book's energy lies in its peripheral characters. The setting is a run-down part of London, only just emerging from gentrification. In it, the vicar's well-to-do wife has to lavish all her love on her cat; the vicar is abstracted, inclined to open his sermons with "Those of you familiar with the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome", and only mildly surprised to find cat-hairs on his altar-cloth; they have to submit separately to the rigours of the church bazaar. There is also a chief librarian, the heroine's boss, who is fastidious about his midday sandwich-fillings and proposes marriage to her - decently deferrable, he im-

plies, until after his mother's death - because he covets her inherited Pembroke table and her Hepplewhite chairs; and a neutered anthropologist, whose name is Rupert Stonebird, and who feels constrained to marry but does not much care who comes first to hand.

Amid these established Pym archetypes, the two victims of the "unsuitable attachment" make little impact. John, the suitor, wearing shoes which "seemed to be a little too pointed", is only occasionally seen, wooing the heroine with unabashed clichés of the most embarrassing kind; he is common, one has to conclude, and almost too common even to be a cad. Ianthe, the heroine, a canon's daughter past her first youth who wears low-heeled, square-toed, discreet shoes and stockings with seams, is impeccable until she "lets love sweep over her like a kind of illness". If John is a vaguely noxious gas, Ianthe is an inert one.

Not a vintage Pym, then; rather, a corked one. The delicate despondencies which warmed *Excellent Women*, for example, are not present here; but fifteen years is a useful suspension for any writer, and the withdrawal of confidence which led to the ban on this book must have lost us many more pleasures than the book itself happens to provide.

Collectors' items

By Alan Hollinghurst

HAROLD ACTON:
The Soul's Gymnasium
And Other Stories
165pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.95.
0 241 10740 7

Sir Harold Acton prefaces the prologue to these tales with a quotation from a Preface by Henry James: "It comes over me even as I write that the general air in which most of these particular flowers of fancy bloom is an air we have pretty well ceased to breathe." This, Acton claims, was written in 1922, a date by which James may be considered to have pretty well ceased to breathe himself. But that apart, the sentence draws attention to Acton's avowed purpose in working in the margin between memoir and fiction: to resuscitate for us a past that requires explanation.

Memoir and fiction, however, though they may nourish each other, none the less have different conventions and meanings. The memoir need do no more than report old gossip, and this is preeminently what society memoirs do: fiction seeks to do rather more. The slightly pathetic device of Acton's "Prologue" is an attempt to justify his stories not as independent fictional artefacts but as depictions of actual people he knew, whose disguises he can hardly bear not to pull away. He recalls: "How often, have I been asked: 'Why don't you write about them?' They would make an amusing novel." His answer was, that these characters from Florentine colonial society were "insufficiently interesting in themselves". The Jamesian lesson is that they don't have to be interesting in themselves at all, and the situation Acton describes here all merit. Treatment, though the short story length adds to a sense of their insignificance. The situation from James inevitably emphasizes Acton's merely sketchy evocation of a vanished age, and the lack of moral nuance in the events recounted.

Acton's Florence is a milieu strangely devoid of value. He revivifies the city as "a unique cultural atmosphere", but this culture is not based on a means of enlightenment for its characters; quite the contrary: all his protagonists enthrall themselves in a self-indulgent, self-satisfied, and self-deceiving world of gossip and intrigue. The typical progress is into increasing self-deceit,

rather than towards imaginative release or the understanding which Florence promotes in, for example, Forster's *A Room with a View* - a novel which also contains a satire on the English colony. Many of Acton's people are collectors, tinged with the destructive egoism of James's Gilbert Osmond, but handled more ambiguously, as representatives of a vanishing world of moneyed idleness.

The treatment of wealth is certainly Jamesian - there is no intimation of where it comes from, or of any issue that is "social" except in the narrowest sense - but the notion of the collection as an expression of a distinguished but moribund existence is strongly reminiscent of the later novels of L. P. Hartley, with their hoards, sales, legacies and violated privacies. The private collector, Acton mourns, "is a fish out of water in a socialist world." This dual attitude towards collectors, as self-obsessed yet estimable, precious in both senses, is typical of the stories' inclinations to both nostalgia and sarcasm. They describe a small and frivolous society which by its very extravagance at once both celebrates and condemns itself.

The most striking outcome of this duality is the very high incidence of deaths which are recorded with no feeling at all. The creatures we are asked to consider are not, it is finally suggested, worth weeping over; but the negative emphasis is not underpinned by any positive vision. The manner of narration, too, resists both penetrating sympathy and moral discrimination: the passage of time is treated as essential to the stories, as to the "gilded" relationship with the material he draws from the city and the people he has known over a long life, but it blurs the focus on the stories which it shapes. Large sweeps of time are covered, World Wars intervene, and the narrative voice blandly takes them in its stride, referring to events rather than coming down on sharply defined scenes which would dramatize the issues as well as involving the reader.

By far the best story is "Fin de Race", which does achieve some complexity of motive and fixes its enquiry in vividly seen moments: a young American couple install themselves in a cinquecento villa to which the husband devotes all his energy, while the wife forms an (unconsummated) attachment to the son of a fallen aristocratic family, imagining she will be able to seduce him away from her husband to never her corner.

In rats' alley

By Andrew Motion

ROBERT McCrum:
A Loss of Heart
282pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.95.
0 241 10705 9

On the first page of *A Loss of Heart* a rat falls and dies at Philip Taylor's feet as he is hurrying down the Charing Cross Road. On the last, Taylor himself is killed by a terrorist who flings him from the upper window of a besieged house. The two incidents make a crudely obvious pair of brackets around an otherwise subtle book, and over-expose themes which for the most part are handled elegantly and mysteriously. The two falls signify a shift from symbolic harassment to actual victimization, and the association of rats with scientific experiments introduces a question of choice and free will. Shortly before meeting his fate, Taylor tells his girlfriend: "I don't want to trace a way through the maze like a rat in a laboratory, and find myself running towards extinction." This fear is more than simply occasional or temperamental: McCrum's narrative attempts to make a connection between Taylor's dilemma and the problems which beset England in its post-imperial decline. Although McCrum's treatment of the actual decay of empire is rather sketchy, his inposition of anxieties at home is entirely convincing. Taylor is compellingly lonely, and the novel engrossingly depressed.

Philip Taylor's role as the representative of a whole country's uncertainty is highlighted by his immediate social background. He has been brought up as a Quaker, and his father is the last in a long line to have worked for the family firm - Mayhew and Taylor, Chemists, "The Family People". For generations, his forbears have compensated for their religious exclusion by enjoying commercial success, but by the 1980s the reasons for alienation have been reversed. Faith is no longer much of an issue, but the firm has been "outgunned" by the European and American giants, and links with the onetime stammer, myopia, broken marriage and unfulfilling job, it is hardly surprising that Philip should feel, when only just thirty, "completely attuned to the possibility of failure".

Philip's elder brother Daniel has reacted more defiantly. After an adolescence spent in bitter arguments with his father, Daniel becomes a journalist and sets about wrecking the (already feeble) family business. When he has investigated its dealings in Africa he exposes them as lethally corrupt, ruins his father, and disappears from sight. By the time the novel opens not even his brother has been seen for years - but an unexpected phone call from Daniel's friend Stevie soon intermingles the lives once again. Partly because he fancies Stevie himself, and partly to shed light on his family, Philip allows himself to become curious about Daniel's missing years. When Daniel is found dead of a heart-attack, the interest becomes positively keen. Philip embarks on a quest for the recent, disruptive past, and in doing so becomes entangled in a violent present as well.

Initially he imagines that Stevie's loathing of continuing English imperialism, and his fear of the police, are merely neurotic dreads. But his brief arrest under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and his detailed discovery of Daniel's disillusionment at home and abroad, rapidly change his mind. It is not just that these events strip him of "the modest anonymity [which] has always been a source of security"; they help to explain Daniel's impatience with talk and analysis. Only action, he understands, is an adequate response to certain predicaments.

But this realization is at odds with Philip's tendency to think too precisely on any event. His relationship with his father and estranged wife maintain their usual pattern of anxiety and bungling, and when he seeks enlightenment from an old family friend he is merely brought face to face with his own ineffectual gloom.

All his life he has been lonely, he had never known loneliness like this. As a child, overshadowed by Daniel, he had learnt to play his own solitary games; in adolescence, when his brother's bank with his father was just beginning to hot up, he was often ignored. Introspection became his armour against the indifference of the world.

It is Stevie who deals with this defensive inwardness most liberally and woundingly. When Philip has tracked her down to Daniel's old flat, his love for her gives him confidence, but her circumstances threaten him. She is acting as a contact for terrorists, and her cellar is full of explosives. When one of the terrorists bursts in with the police on his trail and takes Philip hostage, his personality crisis becomes acute. The stage is the climax of his role as victim, but also exhausts his patience, and his earlier life. He admits to feeling "betrayed by the system I used to believe in". If he were able to act, instead of being forced to react with his life tied, terrified, the episode might provide him with the opportunity to break out of what he has previously condemned as "the predictability of his own future".

The fact that Philip cannot act - not through weakness but by force of circumstances - is the measure of McCrum's proper, humane condemnation of violence. Philip's eventual death is simply pointless and cruel. But the route by which he reaches it forces him to consider the need for liberty, and the function of the outsider, more deeply than his previous experience has permitted. From his original frightened and free realization that he resented the freedom his wife had "discovered at his expense", he comes to battle for autonomy, why Daniel and Stevie have alienated themselves from society, why Stevie herself is still living "in another state" and must finally fall him, and why his own boredom and loneliness are not merely things he has brought upon himself. In the last squalid hours before his death, he develops a painful, but revealing sense of his historical moment, of a gentle, self-accusing repentance of an earlier and more stable age, unwilling to retreat to its security, but unable to answer the demands for barbaric action that the present makes upon him.

John Mole

Irishness adapted

By Roy Foster

How Many Miles to Babylon?
BBC TV

We have been here before, to this particular province of Anglo-Ireland, and Jennifer Johnston has been our guide: the Big House, the slightly desecrated village, the dangerous friendship across the social divide. In this case, however, the house is in its prime, the world is assured, the year is 1914, and the action is a prologue to the more apocalyptic confrontations of the Flanders front. The friendship between landlord's son and peasant boy survives their translation to the battlefield, where a mutual inability to conform to military logic condemns them both in a tragic end. Their association remains undivided as, it is hinted, could not have been the case if they had returned to Ireland and another, more intimate, war.

Jennifer Johnston's strengths are preserved in the characteristically skilful and subtle adaptation by Derek Mahon (who also dramatized the recent *Shadows on our Skin*). Indeed, those strengths are in themselves essentially theatrical: dialogue that uncannily lures mundane changes with highly-charged implication, a talent for conveying both the idiom and the seriousness of childhood relationships, and an unsparringly economical eye which extracts the maximum essence from the minimum detail. Where there is weakness in the novels, it seems to come from a central lack of substance in the plot: all that style, all that accuracy, cannot succeed in concealing constructions which can sometimes be so laconic as to verge dangerously on the banal.

The interesting thing in this adaptation is how the medium effectively clarifies certain lacunae in the book. The novel leaves an unsatisfying uncertainty about the reason why Alexander's beautiful mother forces him to go off to war; on screen, the tension between the parents leaves little doubt that it is her final act in the oblique but terrible

war of attrition between them, and that the son's real offence is his attempt to come to a rapprochement with his father. ("We've all been too well trained in behaviour", says the latter, echoing the title of Molly Keane's recent black threnody in Anglo-Irishness and repression.) Another theme strongly illuminated in the play which adds a valuable coherence is the oddness of being Irish: whether they are Protestants or Catholics, officers or men, they appear alienated, at odds, following in war and peace a different reality from their English counterparts.

Possibly this is the reason for Daniel Day-Lewis's decision to play Alexander with a strong, though middle-class, Irish accent, but this means that, in an otherwise sensitive performance, he does not convince as a son of the Big House. Siân Phillips, half savage and half fey, is notable as his chilling mother. When the action moves to the war, however, the triumph belongs to Barry Foster as Alexander's exasperated major. A part which could have been played with simple blimpish brutality retains the dimension so well conveyed in the novel - that of a sympathetic man trapped into inhumanity by a desperate and relentless logic. The impossibility of Irishness surfaces again in his attempts to make Alexander "face reality", though the dichotomy is made subtler by the attractive playing of David Gillman as Bennett, Alexander's fellow-officer, who contrives to be feckless but English, and who knows how far to go in breaking rules.

In a superbly mounted production, where the war scenes were framed to recall Paul Nash and even the Irish bank-notes were authentically pre-war, Molra Armstrong's direction sometimes set a disconcertingly slow pace; but the final execution scene is extremely moving. The musical score, by Geoffrey Burgon, of *Bridershead* and is nearly as good. Though doubts might remain about a certain structural insufficiency, the period loveliness does not conceal the resilient core of book and play: an exact apprehension of certain ironies and verities, Irish and English, which time does little to change.

The painter-etcher's line

By Celina Fox

William Blake to David Hockney
A Private Collection of British Prints
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

By the 1920s, the enthusiasm for collecting prints had grown into a mania, with its own ritual rights of cataloguing, mounting and display. Encouraged by "mumbo-jumbo experts", as Nevinson dubbed them, advised in numerous publications and supported through clubs, the neophyte was given to understand that he had become part of a select brotherhood of connoisseurs. But with the dissolution of the market following the Wall Street Crash, suspicious "investments" suddenly became worthless bits of paper and few had the tenacity to maintain their faith.

British prints, in particular, have over the last fifty years enjoyed only a piecemeal reassessment. Robert Loder has been acquiring them for ten years and he hopes that the display of part of his collection (on show at the Ashmolean until March 28) will prove something of an eye-opener. Indeed, his proselytizing zeal leads him to make the somewhat startling statement that he knows "of no other tradition of print-making that has consistently produced imaginative work of such quality over two centuries". He does admit, however, that this tradition has had its dark end. The painter-etchers who followed Hadam and Legros, those extraordinarily over-priced heroes of the 1920s Bone and McEay, as well as Griggs and Brock-

hurst with their uncannily meticulous workmanship, all fail to move him.

Instead, one of the principles he has followed is to acquire sets which, he thinks, demonstrate the processes of reproduction most effectively. These include Nevinson's *Building Across*, which displays his characteristic technique of scraping through the lithographic crayon to suggest, in this instance, the shilly allyr wings and patchwork fields beneath the smooth, clean engraved lines of David Jones's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* contrast with the spluttery etchings to Hockney's *A Raven's Progress* which seem to be drawn with a broken nib. But although such series are highly prized, they can also reveal an inability to sustain the imaginative theme and all of these artists have produced better work in single prints.

Besides the exploration of illustrative themes, the exhibition indicates a number of ways of expressing the English landscape. The Norwich

A century exhibition based on the University of Sussex's archive of Virginia Woolf papers is currently being held at the University Library. On display is a collection of first editions of the novels and books of criticism, with cover designs by Vanessa Bell, together with the posthumously published *The Early Years*, contains photographs of the Stephen children and a memoir of the period of Vanessa Bell and her family. The exhibition includes in Jeanne Schulkind's *Moments of Being*. The exhibition contains much of Virginia Woolf's correspondence, letters from

commentary

One man's sense of honour

By Richard Combs

Ragtime
Various cinemas

E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* had such a precise identity that one didn't immediately question its sense of purpose. It treated historical figures as though they were fictional, and in how true man's sense of honour and justice turns him into an outlaw and a murderer with the more contemporary activities of anarchists and socialists, plutocrats and capitalists. In Milos Forman's adaptation, however, Coalhouse's story has become much more prominent. In fact it is made to hear the social documentary burden since the film has excluded people like Emma Goldman and J. P. Morgan as characters, and hence the political forces they represent. It has substituted an odd gallery of luminaries of its own - ranging from James Cagney to Norman Mailer - whose appearance in small parts is presumably meant to provide the same sort of thrill as finding Freud, Houdini, et al in the pages of a novel. It is not quite the same thing, although it does tie in with a self-conscious streak in *Ragtime* about movie processes themselves. This ranges from the humble sidewalk vendor of silhouettes who becomes a grandiloquent director of "photoplays" to the way in which the climactic siege of Coalhouse and his men is shot in such a way as to emphasize elements of lighting and staging. There is in this, perhaps, a stray reminder of Doctorow's theme about the emergence of the consumer society.

But Forman has gambled most on Coalhouse's story to carry the film, although his vendetta against fire chief Willie Conklin doesn't reveal much about the social polarities of their era, except in a very stereotypical way. It also leads to a noticeable switch of focus in the film, from the broad, multi-character fresco of the first half to this steadily more dooladen tale of intolerance and injustice, leading up to the final set-piece in which Coalhouse and his men barricade themselves inside the

Doctorow's version seems to have been taken from Michael Kohlhaas,

the novella by Heinrich von Kleist, who embroidered the historical account with such incidents as Kohlhaas's wife being killed when she tries to petition the Elector of Saxony and is clubbed by a bodyguard. In *Ragtime*, a policeman's baton fells Coalhouse's fiancée when she attempts to approach the Vice-President on a whistle-stop tour. But Doctorow covers his traces well enough, and merges this time-break into contemporary relevance because its origin is Kohlhaas's debate with Booker T. Washington, the spokesman of the respectable black community, and is finally damned by him. The scene never breaks into contemporary relevance because its origin is Kohlhaas's debate with Martin Luther on the subject of forgiving one's enemies.

In emphasizing Coalhouse, Forman is perhaps doing no more than trying to impose the sense of purpose that never seems to come from within the novel. One suspects he is apprehensive about such a fragmented narrative, anyway, since his own islets for social observation, for the revealing minutiae of behaviour in *A Blonde in Love*, *The Fireman's Ball* and *Taking Off*, depend on a strong, simple core around which he can improvise to his heart's content. In a way, he was entirely the wrong director for *Ragtime*, since he plunges into scene after scene, holding up the flow of the movie to elaborate on the performances and frame some behavioural truth, where Doctorow skirts, picking out the pattern. He lingers over the exposition of how Coalhouse's illegitimate child is accepted into the household of Father (James Olson), Mother (Mary Steenburgen) and Younger Brother (Brod Dourif), or the dispute over Evelyn Nesbit (Elizabeth McGovern) that leads Harry K. Thaw to shoot architect Stanford White (Norman Mailer), in order to prove that he can live in the period, and then, through Coalhouse's story, that he has understood it. But as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* indicated, Forman is not a social philosopher, and the film is finally a series of quite handsome demonstrations of a theorem that was one worth proving in the first place.

Speakers at the one-day conference "Black Writers in Britain", which will take place at the Commonwealth Institute on March 6, include Muzeha Matura, Buchi Emecheta and Sebastian Clarke.

The History of Parliament: The Commons 1558-1603

Edited by P. W. Hales

This monumental three-volume work provides a detailed biographical dictionary of Members of the House of Commons during the reign of Elizabeth I. It examines Members' backgrounds and their relationships with their constituencies, together with the development of the committee system in Parliament, the role of the Marian exiles in the Commons, and the statistical background to each of the ten Parliaments of the period. A magnificent work of reference for historians.

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Ray Desmond

A detailed historical account of the India Office Museum, formed by the East India Company to house and display artefacts, natural history specimens and raw products of the Indian sub-continent. The book examines the Museum's origins, its growth and acquisitions, the importance of its natural history collections, its exhibitions, publications, and its final dispersal in 1879.

£25.00 illus.

The Transfer of Power in India 1942-47. Vol. X

The Mountbatten Viceroyalty: Formulation of A Plan, 22 March - 30 May 1947

Edited by Nicholas Mansergh and Frederick Moon

The first of three volumes on the Mountbatten Viceroyalty provides, for the first time, a documentary account of how the Viceroy shaped and re-shaped a plan for a final handover of power. Much of the evidence (taken from the India Office Records and the Mountbatten Papers) has never before been published, and it sheds new light on the events, personalities and controversies surrounding the last momentous days of the Raj.

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to the editor

Charles I's Executioner

Sir. - The William Walker alleged to be the executioner of Charles I (John Schellenberger, Letters, January 22) has also been a longtime candidate for the translator of the monarchical tract *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*, first published in Latin in 1579. A manuscript note in the British Library copy of the 1689 English edition reads: "This translation was the work of Mr William Walker of Durnal near Sheffield, the person who cut off King Charles's Head." This fact is noted in the Thomson's tracks catalogue, I, 597 (referring to the 1648 English version).

J. M. H. SALMON,
Department of History, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania 19010.

Sir. - Was the Wm Hulet (or Hulet) who was supposedly an assistant of the execution of Charles I, a former petty canon of Gloucester, to whom in 1631 the now dead, Accepted Frewen, gave his first mention when "no occasion being given him", Hulet spoke "insolently and unmanly" to hint in the presence of the quire? Vide my *Godfrey Goodman, Bishop of Gloucester, 1583-1636* (1953) p. 188, where a footnote adds - "The Common Singing Men in Cathedral Churches, the sixty sixth character in Earle's *Micro-cosmography* might have been based on the Gloucester Chapter Acts. It is worth noting that a certain William Hulet was suspected after the Restoration of being the executioner of Charles I." A further footnote on p. 346 shows that he was probably, ordained.

GEOFFREY SODEN,
Buck Brigg, Hanworth, Norfolk.

Intellectual Resistance

Sir. - Robert Boyers is no doubt correct. In his review (January 15) of James Wilkinson's *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe*, to infer that "the larger picture reveals how rapidly hope gave way to resignation". Hope, at least political hope, makes a habit of doing just that. I should have liked to have seen more evidence, however, that Boyers had consulted some of the primary sources (apart from the French ones) on whom Wilkinson has drawn.

Boyers's lack of familiarity with Wilkinson's subject becomes transparent at times. But someone ought to have queried him about at least some of his salutes into the intellectual history of the period. "It is hard to be impressed", Boyers writes, "by the poetry of German émigrés [sic]"

who submitted mournfully to Hitler as if he were a force of nature... The phrase for which your reviewer was groping was "inner émigrés", without the adjective and the quotation marks, and in the security of exile, German intellectuals and writers did not submit, mournfully or otherwise.

Again, "Important Italian writers like Pavese and Vittorini have had only a modest number of their works translated into English, and these are in general not widely read or discussed." A glance at the Skidmore College library catalogue and a self-assigned bit of reading of the many translations published on both sides of the Atlantic - of varying quality, to be sure - would have convinced him otherwise. If *Politecnico*, the first review Vittorini edited, could not have been launched to resist fascism or criticized by Togliatti's *Rinascita* for nurturing open debate, because neither journal was published clandestinely. Instead, *Politecnico* was born and died during the immediate postwar period, by which time hope was indeed giving way to resignation. Pavese's feelings about America were a lot more complex and ambivalent, even after the war, than Wilkinson suggests and Boyers echoes uncritically. In any case, one of the things Pavese resisted was systematic politics (see his diary, badly and incompletely translated though it is).

Intellectual history, especially of a recent epoch, contains pitfalls for reviewers as much as for the historians who write it. Your readers deserve more than warnings about the dangers of succumbing to "irrational prophetism", whatever that may be.

RICHARD KOFFLER,
Association of American University Presses, 1 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

Yorkists and Tudors

Sir. - I am grateful to Isobel Wigram for so rapidly offering proof for my allegation that the champions of Richard III cherish an inappropriate passion for which no historical justification can be found. In such cases, argument is obviously pointless: it will make no difference that I can readily demonstrate the absence of any venom or defensiveness in my assessment of that king. The discourteous reply (a real temptation) would simply transfer the headline "you used for the last letter printed on February 12 to the first; courtesy enjoins that the devout be left to their prayers."

George Bernard's letter offers a more valuable contribution, though in his desire to deny that the six-

teenth century differed from the fifteenth he seems to have misunderstood the point I was making. In speaking of a "national" king I was talking about political tactics, not about possibly elevated purposes, and I really cannot see how poor Anne Boleyn got into the act. We are all agreed that the Tudors depended as fully as their predecessors and successors on that partnership between king and "political" nation which has always characterized successful government in England. However, what happened in the decades after 1450 prevented the application of the formula because the monarchs then confined partnership to well-defined sections of the nobility (the political nation of the day) and joined in the factious attacks upon others. As the event showed, this was a poor way of preserving that stability and tranquillity which, as Dr Bernard says, it was in the interest of the ruling order to maintain. So far as I can judge, Henry VII deliberately endeavoured to avoid being stamped as the head of a Tudor, or indeed a Lancastrian, faction, whereas politically Edward IV remained a Yorkist and Richard III a northerner.

G. R. ELTON,
Clare College, Cambridge CB2 1TL.

Eudora Welty

Sir. - As a resident of Columbus, Ohio, I would be delighted to learn that Eudora Welty had actually gone to school here, but in fact it was in Columbus, Mississippi, that Miss Welty attended Mississippi State College for Women before going to the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and the Columbia School of Business in New York City.

I was surprised to learn also, in Jennifer Uglow's review (January 8) of Eudora Welty's *Collected Stories*, that in England *One Time, One Place* is thought of as a novel; the book we have is a volume of photographs of rural Southern poor people - black and white - that Miss Welty took with a Kodak box camera as WPA worker during the Depression. She wrote one story called "Keels, the Outcast Indian Maiden" (no, two, each with part of that title), and another called "A Shower of Gold" (not "The Golden Shower").

I am glad that Miss Welty is getting some recognition in the UK; a nation that nurtured the Powys brothers and Elizabeth Bowen should appreciate her wonderful stories.

SUZANNE FERGUSON,
Department of English, Ohio State University, 164 West 17th Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

Information, please

Olwen Bowen and Horry Rountrie, author and illustrator of *Beetles and Things* (Elkin Mathews, 1931); information sought about their subsequent careers.

R. P. Cooper,
Glebe House, Sopworth, Chippingham, Wiltshire.

George Herbert: whereabouts of the manuscript of c1680, an adaptation for singing of *The Temple*, by "T. B.", described by Grosart in his 1874 edition of Herbert. At the time Grosart was writing, the manuscript was in the possession of "P. V. Cosens, Esq., London".

Department of English, Baylor University, Waco, Texas 76798.

Lord Drummond McKelvey, of McKelvey (b. 1915), Battle of Britain pilot; graduate of Oxford, London School of Economics by 1952, son of Walter McKelvey, 1947, prominent Canadian lecturer, whereabouts of descendants and any ex-ant papers.

Anthony, 2500 Main Street, Park, Toronto M7A 2R9.

Edward Jacob, lawyer, British Residency, administrator and Native Advocate, Joint Court, New Hebrides (1911); author of *France and England in the New Hebrides* (1914); personal papers, correspondence, reminiscences sought for inclusion in a history of the land question in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu).

W. E. Stobet,
115 Selly Park Road, Selly Park, Birmingham B29 7HY.

W. F. Lawson, stage and film actor; letters, other documentary material, and personal reminiscences sought for a forthcoming biography.

Peter Cortes,
c/o Robinson Books, Bolsover House, 5-6 Clarendon Street, London W1P 7EB.

Geoffrey Madan (1895-1947); letters etc sought for a privately printed memoir.

Beatrice Brookbank,
Mill House, Higham, Colchester, Essex.

Lord Raglan (1885-1964); author of *The Hero*; citations of articles, reviews, letters, etc; for a collection of miscellaneous essays and a bibliography of his work.

William Logan,
5 Pretoria Road, Cambridge.

Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957); would anyone in possession of any letters of hers please contact me, preferably indicating the date of each letter, whether handwritten or typed, approximate length and subject-matter, with a view to its eventual inclusion in an edition of her Selected Letters and Miscellaneous Writings.

Anthony Fleming,
c/o David Higham Associates Ltd, 5-8, Lower John Street, Golden Square, London W1R 4HA.

Frederick Courtenay Selous, noted hunter and traveller to Southern Africa; whereabouts of any manuscript materials by him or relating to his career (except those in the National Archives of Zimbabwe); for a biography.

J. A. Casady,
Department of History, Winthrop College, Rock Hill, SC 29735.

Literary criticism in brief

Shakespeare

DOUGLAS MIDDLEBROOK:

Sweet My Love

A study of Shakespeare's Sonnets 159pp. Adelaide: The New Word Press. (Distributed in the U.K. by Wendy Slade, 93 Talfourd Road, Peckham, London, S.E.15) £2.50. 0 908268 0 5

It is a remarkable aspect of human psychology that certain artistic creations and areas of knowledge seem to lend themselves to the attention of any untrained enthusiast. The civilisations of pre-Columbian America, the hypothetical cults of the Druids, the learning of the Egyptians, all attract such enthusiasts: in literature the prime so is not altogether clear: why, for example, is there no attempt to prove that Richard II wrote the poems of Chaucer; that Richard III (or one of the Princes in the Tower) survived the Tudor conquest to write Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, or that Byron or Keats returned to England incognito to write the poems of Tennyson? The fact remains that Shakespeare, and particularly the Sonnets, are felt to be public property, to be reassigned and reinterpreted with a blithe dismissal of historical fact or plausibility.

JEAN WILSON

Joyce

JACKSON L. COPE:

Joyce's Cities

Archaeologies of the Soul 144pp. The Johns Hopkins University Press. £7.75. 0 8018 2543 1

Jackson Cope begins by identifying a *fin-de-siècle* symbol of the city and dwells on James Thomson's "City of Dreadful Night" as a prefiguration of Joyce's presentation of "paralysis" in *Dubliners*. He invokes Dante, Eliot and, through Eliot, Jessie Weston, and he quotes in full Joyce's marvellous parody of *The Waste Land*: "Rouen is the rainiest place getting inside all impermeables, wetting damp marrow in drenched bones." The argument covers a good deal of ground: the Macpherson and Chatterton forgeries, Futurism, Walter Benjamin and Joyce's indebtedness to the mythic self-portraits of Gabriele D'Annunzio. The longest chapters discuss the contemporary interest in cabalistic tradition shown by MacGregor Mathers and Yeats in relation to *Ulysses* and the popular Egyptology of James Hope Moulton in relation to *Finnegans Wake*. Most strikingly, Cope juxtaposes the archaeological discoveries made by Schliemann in Greece and by Evans in the Cretan of Minoan civilisation with the classicalism of Joyce's early works, and the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922 with *Finnegans Wake*.

This makes a highly imaginative collage of material, much of which might have been related more conclusively to Joyce. Unfortunately, here it remains in collage, closer to gimmickry than to a genuine exploration of the complicated relations between the contemporary phenomena. So much perfect handling; there is little room for Joyce himself, and most of all the author's overriding desire to portray Joyce as a mystic is misplaced. Joyce did construct his own system of heightened significances (arguably akin to mystic systems in some way) but there are no proofs offered to support the idea that his work represents the kind of spiritual journey that Cope suggests it does, or indeed that the *Cabala* provides an easy key to understanding Joyce any more than it provides such a key in life.

Richard Brown

Pynchon

THOMAS H. SCHAUB:

Pynchon: The Voice of Ambiguity 165pp. University of Illinois Press. £6.50. 0 252 00816 2

"The experience of reading Pynchon," Thomas H. Schaub considers, "is really an analogue of the conundrums of search his books describe." Like the novels' protagonists, the reader is goaded into mentally ransacking a welter of diverse material in the hope of finding a definitive meaning; like them, he is thwarted. But "the uncertainties and ambiguities which attend the reading of Pynchon's fiction are not a failure of the reader: nor a result of authorial neglect or confusion." Lack of conclusive pattern is what the books are designed to show; doubt is the one thing you can be sure they're conveying. As with Oedipus at the end of *The Crying of Lot 49*, the reader is

deliberately and elaborately - left uncertain as to whether he has spotted a coded communication system, or is imposing patterns of his own invention.

This isn't a particularly original perception about Pynchon: nor is Schaub's other main point - about the pervasiveness and significance of the theories of entropy in the novels. Where his study does offer something new is in its detailed elucidations of the often out-of-material worked into the books from Pynchon's encyclopaedic knowledge of the world and especially the sciences, and of his almost religious devotion to Pynchon's writings. Schaub provides much useful exegesis; though in rather ignoring the slapstick, comic-strip aspects of the books, he tends to make them sound far more solemn than they are.

Peter Kemp

MATTHEW J. BRUCOLI:

Some Sort of Epic Grandeur
The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald

624pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £14.95. 0 340 275790

Matthew J. Brucoli is the head of the Scott Fitzgerald industry, no mere guardian, but a spreader of the sacred flame. A list of books in which he has been editorially or otherwise involved, printed before the title page of this biography, mentions fifteen works concerned with Fitzgerald. They include two volumes of previously uncollected stories, the author's correspondence with his agent Harold Ober, a collection of other letters, his notebooks and a ledger of earnings, as well as a facsimile of *The Great Gatsby* and an "Apparatus for a Definitive Edition" of that book. Nor is Fitzgerald the only American novelist who has felt the benevolent Brucoli editorial hand. Here is *Ernest Hemingway, Cub Reporter*, here is a collection of Raymond Chandler's youthful essays and poems, and elsewhere the minutiae, bibliographic and otherwise, of Ross Macdonald, Ring Lardner, John O'Hara and James Gould Cozzens. Professor Brucoli is the contemporary champion picker-up of uncollected trifles, or as Fitzgerald's daughter Scottie once put it, he loves his authors so much that he found one of their grocery lists he would publish it in an annotated edition.

But is it the authors he loves or the grocery lists? The question is prompted not by the bulk of his book, which is less than a hundred pages, since more than a hundred pages are occupied by appendices and notes, but by its approach, and style, in answer to a self-posed question about what is in his book which is not present in the biographies by Arthur Mizener (1951) and Andrew Turnbull (1962) he replies: more facts. This is undeniable, but many of the facts are those we do not need or wish to know. Of what value is it to be given a list of Fitzgerald's schoolboy friends, a list that extends over several lines and tells us that Richard Washington was called "Tubby" and Gustave Schermeler "Bobby" when they played no recorded part in his adult life? Why should we be told that on his last day Fitzgerald ate a late sandwich lunch, read the newspapers, and wanted to go to the nearby Schwab's drugstore on Sunset Boulevard for ice cream, but settled for a chocolate bar given him by Shellie Graham? Was it a Hershey bar, was the sandwich tuna fish or corned beef? If Brucoli knew, he would be sure he would have told us. Elsewhere we learn that 1896, the year of Fitzgerald's birth, was also that in which Benny Leonard, Legs Diamond, Lillian Gish, Buster Keaton and others saw the light, and that "Victoria was on the throne of the British Empire, Grover Cleveland was to the White House, and William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan were campaigning for the Presidency." This mass of facts is put down with the flatness of a stock market report. In the least of his stories Fitzgerald had a concern for style: that of his latest biographer is often graceless enough to set, the least sensitive teeth on edge.

So much must be said in dispraise, yet for anybody interested in Fitzgerald as man or writer, this is an indispensable book. It is less a biography than a document of readings, one which makes occasional judgments on Fitzgerald the writer, but does not try to assess his character. Brucoli does not give all the facts that may be found elsewhere - he does not, for example, quote from the witty letter Fitzgerald sent to a woman who said she was making a study of his life and works, in which he gave her a list of his members of his generation? Going out to Hollywood for the third time in 1937, at the age of forty, he wrote to his daughter that a few years back:

"the enterprise. We get, for example, the whole of the seven-page memorandum written by Fitzgerald in 1930 (but perhaps not sent) 'with Zelda gone to the Clinique', and the forty-two page summary of their marriage written by Zelda in the same year. These are documents, evidence of their rawness, distressing evidence of the destructive character of their love. 'We ruined ourselves - I have never honestly thought that we ruined each other', he says at the end of his memorandum, but Zelda's letter accuses him of neglect, drunkenness ('You were literally eternally drunk the whole summer'), and again and again of a failure to love. 'I know in my heart... that love is bitter and all there is, and that the rest is for the emotional beggars of the earth and is about the equivalent of people who stimulate themselves with dirty postcards'."

Two years later they were locked in a savage conflict over Zelda's novel that became *Save Me The Wozz*. Brucoli gives extracts, transcribed from "a dim microfilm" at Johns Hopkins Hospital, of an extraordinary session presided over by Zelda's current doctor, in which Fitzgerald's chief concern was that her writing would damage his reputation, hers to assert herself as a creative personality independent of her husband. The exchanges were brutal. He called her a third-rate writer and ballet dancer, and insisted that she must do exactly what he said. "If I make a trip to Panama end you and I go around - I am the professional novelist and I am supporting you. This is all my material. None of it is your material." At this time Fitzgerald had not published a novel for seven years, and Zelda's reply was a shrewd thrust: "What is the matter with Scott is that he has not written that book and if he will ever get it written, why he won't feel so miserable and suspicious and mean towards everybody else." In reading such passages, and there are many of them, it is necessary to remember that Fitzgerald was drinking hard, and that Zelda was schizophrenic. Even so, the benefits derived from such bottles, with the psychiatrist playing the part of mostly ignored umpire, seem doubtful. For this session Fitzgerald for the first time thought seriously of divorce.

Eliot's remark about the division in the artist between the man who suffers and the mind that creates found a perfect exemplification in Fitzgerald, although in his case the suffering was caused partly by his delighted determination to combine the bitch goddess Success. The ambition to be a great writer was apparent from his mid-teens, and when in 1917 he began writing a novel in Army training camp, it was because he expected to be killed in action, and wished to leave behind some evidence of his genius. Abundant evidence of his desire to learn his craft and to write well is apparent in the elaborate plotting and replotting of every novel, the unstinting readiness to rewrite, the culturally educated lists he made out for himself and others, from the balance-sheet of his stories' merits and defects drawn up in youth to the "College of One" reading-list he made out for Shellie Graham in Hollywood. Fitzgerald was academically unsuccessful at Princeton, and never learnt to spell, but it would be true to say that he educated himself painstakingly in the things that mattered to him, and did it very well. The dramatic impetus he often effected by rewriting can be seen in the two endings of *The Great Gatsby*, both printed here. But he would not only write well but to be praised for it, both by critics and a wide general public. If Fitzgerald (1) was a pure artist, Fitzgerald (2) was constantly concerned about his position on the writing ladder. Was he being overhauled by Hemingway, whose work he had generously praised when Hemingway was unknown? How did he stand in relation to other members of his generation? Going out to Hollywood for the third time in 1937, at the age of forty, he wrote to his daughter that a few years back:

"the enterprise. We get, for example, the whole of the seven-page memorandum written by Fitzgerald in 1930 (but perhaps not sent) 'with Zelda gone to the Clinique', and the forty-two page summary of their marriage written by Zelda in the same year. These are documents, evidence of their rawness, distressing evidence of the destructive character of their love. 'We ruined ourselves - I have never honestly thought that we ruined each other', he says at the end of his memorandum, but Zelda's letter accuses him of neglect, drunkenness ('You were literally eternally drunk the whole summer'), and again and again of a failure to love. 'I know in my heart... that love is bitter and all there is, and that the rest is for the emotional beggars of the earth and is about the equivalent of people who stimulate themselves with dirty postcards'."

In that last quotation appears Fitzgerald (3), who was interested above all in the sound of the cash register. It was this Fitzgerald who kept the ledger, reproduced in part here as an appendix, which showed the amount he had earned each year by writing, and divided the total sum between books, stories and articles. Nearly \$20,000 dollars in 1920, more than \$25,000 two years later, almost \$30,000 in 1927, a peak of \$37,000 odd in 1931, and then decline to little more than \$10,000 in 1936. The ledger was kept meticulously, with book royalties entered even when they were almost non-existent, like the \$58.35 for all book royalties in 1934. When Fitzgerald went to Hollywood for the last time he gave up the record, perhaps because income from sources other than work on film scripts was disappearing. The last yearly statements before his death showed forty copies sold of all books, the royalty being \$13.13.

Long before this, however - indeed, very early on - Fitzgerald had realized that novels paid much less well than the short stories he found it so easy to write. The amount he was paid for stories - although not all stories, and generally not the best stories - went up and up. When he told Hemingway in 1929: "Here's a last flicker of the old cheap pride - the *Post* now pays the old where \$4,000 a screw", all three Fitzgeralds had a share in the remark. Fitzgerald (1) called the stories whoring, Fitzgerald (2) couldn't help feeling proud to be tops, Fitzgerald (3) took the money as just reward for having "mastered the 40 positions". A moral censor also existed, who brooded over all three Fitzgeralds, and was dissatisfied with almost everything they did. Another aspect of the censor appears in his severely pedagogical treatment of the youthful Scottie and of Shellie Graham; and his shocked surprise when he learned that Shellie had slept with eight men.

Although so many lines of the excellent index refer to "drinking problem", Brucoli offers no suggestions about any basic cause for Fitzgerald's drinking, beyond a couple of pages of textbook definition of alcoholism, and mention of a psychiatrist who in 1939 diagnosed Fitzgerald as suffering from hypoglycaemia or hyperinsulinism, which causes a craving for sugar that may be passed by alcohol. Fitzgerald's blood-sugar count was normal, however, and Brucoli gets no further than the suggestion that he "sometimes drank to alleviate the feelings of guilt provoked by his drinking". But alcoholism is a symptom, not a cause. What started the drinking?

The facts that Fitzgerald's father was a business failure, and a heavy drinker cannot be ignored, but the possibility that the origins of Fitzgerald's drinking were chiefly sexual is not seriously considered here, although there is evidence that his relationship with Zelda was less than satisfactory. He was much concerned when she accused him of having a homosexual relationship with Hemingway (Fitzgerald was contemptuous of "frits"), and also when she complained that his penis was too small. After ornamentation by Hemingway and others the penis was certified normal, but Fitzgerald was sufficiently worried to try an experimental session with a prostitute, by which time Zelda was near breakdown, but their frantic drinking and reckless behaviour was the year after marriage. In 1920 may have been an expression of sexual frustration.

That is conjecture, but the facts are here. Fitzgerald began with "drugstore sherry" in his mid-teens at Princeton drank only beer and was thought to be clowning when he appeared to be "high", but by the

mid-1920s was a steady drinker, for preference of straight gin "which gave him the quickest lift". Brucoli tells us that his tolerance of alcohol was low, so that like Poe he got drunk easily. In the last decade of his life it was downhill most of the way, with prodigious benders being succeeded by brief periods of the sauce. No other novelist has written so many scenes about drunks in so few books (food is rarely mentioned in Fitzgerald), and drinking is for the most part seen disapprovingly. Yet the censor sometimes relaxed. *The Beautiful and Damned*, which for the most part could serve as a text on the evils of drink, contains a passage near the end about "the kindness of intoxication... that indescribable gloss and glamour it gave, like the memories of ephemeral and faded evenings".

In simple terms - that is, ignoring motives - alcoholism wrecked Fitzgerald's life and his literary career. Zelda was a subsidiary factor: indeed, it might be said that if she had not existed Fitzgerald would have found it necessary to discover a stand-in for her, some other woman companion on what Brucoli calls the drunkard's holiday. The facts that Zelda was herself emotionally unable to cope with life and had thwarted instinct for literary creation were not accidental: in youth Fitzgerald did not want a Shellie Graham to educate and rebel against, but a rival to whom he could always be superior. Zelda wrote for publication her own review of *The Beautiful and Damned*, in which she suggested that her husband had plagiarized a bit of her diary; she "always felt a story in the *Post* was tops", and such mild bickering and evidence of her intellectual inferiority was not unusual. Later on, of course, with her collapse, the battle between them became a strain under which both cracked. Carl Van Vechten expressed their relationship succinctly when he said, in a sentence quoted here: "Rilda and David tortured each other, because they loved one another devotedly."

The rest of the story is familiar, although Brucoli corrects the record on several minor points. *This Side of Paradise* sold 50,000 copies, but was not one of the ten best-selling novels of 1920 (of course we get the names of the ten authors). The reception of *Tender is the Night* was critically disappointing, but there is a list of the many fellow writers who admired it. The books were not out of print when Fitzgerald died, and "the popular image of Fitzgerald as a broken-down, forgotten failure in Hollywood is a distortion", although there may still be truth in Andrew Turnbull's picture of him as a man living in the past, asking questions about celebrities of the 1920s as though they were still in the news, unknown to most people around Hollywood except as a dimly remembered name.

The justification for so much attention to the life is the books; and the books have long since revived from their neglect in the author's last decade. The period of neglect was short. As early as 1943, the young Alfred Kazin, in a book often harshly critical of the writers who came to fame in the 1920s, that Fitzgerald was "in some ways, inherently more interesting than any other (writer) in his generation". Two years later *The Portable F. Scott Fitzgerald* appeared, in which John O'Hara called him "our best novelist". By 1951, when Arthur Mizener's biography was published, the tide was in full flow. Today there are books and articles by the dozen, including such publications as an illustrated booklet about Fitzgerald's "homes and haunts". In his native Minnesota. Even his Riviera friends Gerald and Sara Murphy have been the subjects of a biographical account, which pays much attention to their relationship with Fitzgerald. Such works as *The Beautiful and Damned* and *The Great Gatsby* are now being reissued, and the destructive damage of it played

out in public, has become blended with the work, so that the books take on a meretricious glow and glamour from the life. If one looks at the work separately from the life, its merits may be seen more reasonably.

This Side of Paradise was the much-revised version of a novel called *The Romantic Egoist*, a title that summarizes the nature of Fitzgerald's talent. His attitude to life was one of expectancy, and in the darkest days he believed in a future of infinite possibilities. That incredulous cry of Gatsby's: "Can't repeat the past?" Why of course you can't, was Fitzgerald's own, and his creed is enshrined in the book's last two paragraphs, about Gatsby's belief in "the organic future that year by year recedes before us", and that melts into the perfect past. It was the belief in a perfect relationship, a perfect novel, a perfect life, that kept optimism shining bright through Zelda's schizophrenia, his own crack-up, the humiliations of a Hollywood where he was one of sixteen writers who worked on *Gone With the Wind*. Romanticism, not content, prompted those fine phrases about being the last of the novelists for a long time now" and about the epic grandeur to be discovered in his life, a romantic dream of the past that led him to call his final assault on Hollywood "the last tired effort of a man who once did something finer".

No doubt part of him knew that he was just making fine phrases, but he might have asked: what else except fine phrases should a writer make? There is an innocence about his absolute romanticism that gives charm to what would otherwise seem ludicrous or hopelessly over-written scenes in the early novels, and to many of the slightest short stories. One of many near-ridiculous but charming phrases about being the "end of *Paradise* wrote Amory reflects on the "many places where one might deteriorate pleasantly... where lust could be a mode and expression of life, where the shades of night skies and sunset would seem to reflect only moods of passion; the colours of lips and popples". The 1890s, dying fall is agreeably done, but the real attraction of the passage is the evident youth and hopefulness of supposedly world-weary Amory. Fitzgerald himself remained emotionally youthful, the possessor of Gatsby's "extraordinary gift for hope", to the end.

With the romance went the energizing but artistically limiting egotism. The notebooks are evidence of how hard Fitzgerald tried to pin down the outer world of people, places and occasions, yet his chief male character is never anybody but Scott Fitzgerald, and the female one is almost always Zelda. Really he knew nobody but himself. Sara Murphy, who served as the physical model for Nicole in *Tender is the Night*, put it with deadly accuracy: "You don't even know what Zelda or Scottie are like - in spite of your love for them. It seemed to us the other night (Gerald told) that all you thought and felt about them was in terms of yourself." Gerald Murphy was the original model for Dick Diver in *Tender*, but the problems he faces are Fitzgerald's. Monroe Stahr in *The Last Tycoon* is torn between Zelda (the living but remote Zelda) and her apparent physical image, Kathleen (Shellie Graham), and again personal emotional problems damage a story which should be more concerned with other things. In *Gatsby* alone a kind of integration is achieved by splitting the Fitzgerald character in two: Nick Carraway, who is involved in the action yet comments on it as a Middle Western moral center, touched with innocence, and Gatsby himself, whose own outrageous integrity is out of keeping with his highly dubious business associations.

From the beginning, friends and admirers made allowances for the romantic egoist's limitations. As a novelist, Fitzgerald was a failure. As a man, he was a success. He was called anything but very bad. They

The quest of a Born and Die Baby

By D. A. N. Jones

AMON TUTUOLA:

The Witch-Herbalist of the Remote Town
205pp. Faber. £6.50 (paperback, £2.95).
0 571 11703 1

Anyone who enjoys Nigerian writing in English must salute Amon Tutuola, the man who made the breakthrough in 1952 with *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. It is appropriate that the founder of a literature should be a working-class man, an early school-leaver, making poetic use of the idioms of the unlettered. Tutuola was like a seventeenth-century Welshman who had just discovered the sweetness of the English tongue. *The Witch-Herbalist of the Remote Town* is his first novel for fourteen years: his English, though not as wild as it once was, still has a flavour of the early school-leaver, a newcomer to the language. The very title shows it. No Englishman would lay such stress on the dull word "remote"; but for Tutuola it has a resonance. "Witch-Herbalist" must be his own choice. There are people in Nigeria who cure ailments with herbs and magic, and Tutuola is one of them. He is a man who has made a living out of his knowledge of the herbs and magic of his people. He is a man who has made a living out of his knowledge of the herbs and magic of his people. He is a man who has made a living out of his knowledge of the herbs and magic of his people.

The story he tells is about a quest. His hero has a barren wife and must make a long journey through demon-haunted bush, to get a fertility potion from the Witch-Herbalist. On

his return, he is so thirsty that he drinks some himself, despite the Witch-Herbalist's warning. Thus, both the husband and wife give birth to children. Perhaps the story of Orpheus in the underworld who worked on Tutuola's imagination. No one can be certain of his sources.

When I taught, in the 1960s, in a Nigerian girls' school, I noticed in Tutuola's popular book, *Simbi and the Sayer of the Dark Jungle*, and who else would recognize a Greek myth of Perseus; so, I asked my pupils if he was adapting an old African legend. "No," they said. "He got it from *Latin for Today, Part I*." Tutuola is certainly always glad to use the ancient legends of Europe, Greco-Roman or Judeo-Christian; but he is perhaps at his most powerful when working with African mythology. The most haunting chapter in *The Witch-Herbalist* derives from the Yoruba concept of the *abiku*.

An *abiku* is something like a "changing" - a child that belongs in the spirit-world, in a sort of Eftland. He is born, he is loved and petted, and then he dies, going back to his spirit companions in the bush. The next time his mother conceives, she may recognize the same spirit in a new little body. This one too may die, and then the next. . . . These babies are all the same *abiku* and strong magic is needed to keep them on this earth. There are several Nigerian poems, in English, about *abiku*. Wole Soyinka in his memoir, *Aké* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), tells of a little girl he knew in his boyhood; she was believed to be an *abiku*. She might be called by the

spirits at any time. "Amulets, bangles, tiny rattles and dark copper-twist rings *enraptured* her," writes Soyinka. "The two tiny cicatrices on her face were also part of the many enchantments to entice him to her companions in the other world. Like all *abiku* she was privileged, apart. Her parents dared not scold her for long or earnestly."

We wonder what it is like, this "other world", this Eftland of the *abiku*. Tutuola tells us in the chapter called "The Town of the Born and Die Baby". His hero eats strange fruit; on his way to the Remote Town, he lies down and sees his stomach open - and sees himself emerge from his adult body in the form of a baby. Now, he is that baby and he looks back on his lifeless adult body with dislike as he marches to the mystic town, where he has long been awaited. He was, he explains, born as an *abiku*, a "Born and Die Baby", but the spirits had never got him because "his father had tied him down with a powerful juju". By eating that strange fruit he has reversed the spell - and now he is in a spirit-world where the other *abiku* disdain him, thinking him a coward for not dying before and joining them in the bush. He has to prove his courage before they will let him resume adult shape and continue his dutiful quest in search of fertility.

This episode has a peculiar magic, since it harmonizes with the whole theme of the quest, expressing that passionate need for children which is so natural in sane societies. The weird division of the hero - now a philoprogenitive adult, now a death-defying baby - prepares us for the final chapter, when he finds that his

various personalities have come to life before his eyes and are holding a court of enquiry into his behaviour. For the hero has several personalities: there is his first mind, his second mind, his memory and (more mysterious) his "Supreme Second". They have accompanied him throughout his journey, like Dorothy's companions in *The Wizard of Oz*. First Mind has usually been timorous, Second Mind not much less so. Memory has sometimes been useful, sometimes over-prudent: only the "Supreme Second" has been a consistent protector and ally.

If a European had imagined this extraordinary court of enquiry, he might have populated it with Ego, Id and Superego, with inferiority Complex and Collective Unconscious - for everyone needs to personify his personalities, and Viennese mythology is as good as any for most poetic

purposes. A European equivalent to the "Supreme Second" may be found, perhaps, in R. M. Hare's book, *Moral Thinking*, in which Hare imagines, sitting above our memories and our teachers' precepts, an archangel in each man's head attempting thoughtful and ever "Tutuola is not 'doing philosophy' - nor psychology; he is writing a fiery tale, and all ends happily."

So I ate and drank to my satisfaction as the people of the town were still beating the drums, singing, dancing, eating and drinking about the town. . . . The old people told my wife to bring her baby to the front of the house and in front of the two-headed ape which I had pegged to the ground, they blessed the baby and, after the whole of them returned to their houses, with hilarity which could not be described.

Making their way

By Peter Lewis

ELAINE FEINSTEIN:

The Survivors
317pp. Hutchinson. £7.95.
0 09 145850 1

Some novelists write the same book over and over again; others spring surprises with every new book they produce, so that in the end they would only surprise us by repeating themselves. Coming in the wake of *The Ecstasy of Dr Miriam Gerner* and *The Shadow Master*, Elaine Feinstein's new novel, *The Survivors*, indicates that she is well on the way to being a writer of infinite variety. Critics of her early novels who saw them as a strictly limited though distinguished talent, and Feinstein as a refined poet-novelist, the ultra-sensitive writer of exquisite and delicately shaded prose, should now take to word-eating.

After adventures in the paranoid of the Murdoch-influenced *The Ecstasy of Dr Miriam Gerner*, and the apocalyptic fustian of legend with international politics in *The Shadow Master*, Feinstein has now attempted a realistic novel of the family-saga type, encompassing three generations. *The Survivors* is about two Jewish families from Liverpool who have very little in common except their Jewishness, and the fact that the heads of the families at the opening of the novel, Solomon Gordon and Abram Katz, emigrated from Odessa at the turn of the century to escape the institutionalized antisemitism of Tsarist Russia. The Gordons are extremely well-to-do and middle-class, and have been assimilated to a considerable extent into English society. The Katz family is working class, belongs to the Liverpool equivalent of a ghetto (within a slum area), and is orthodox in religion.

Although the novel is divided into four sections, marked by dates (February 1914, October 1920, March 1934, 1956), the narrative unfolds continuously over about sixty years against a background of European history from shortly before the First World War until the 1970s. The lengths of the sections, which grow progressively shorter, are approximately in inverse proportion to the time-spans covered, so that the long first section, occupying more than a third of the book, deals only with the 1914-1918 period. By alternating between the two families during this section, Feinstein creates a wide range of characters, representative of two entirely different ways of life. The two families come into conflict only briefly, at a military hospital where Solomon Gordon's rebellious daughter Dorothy nurses the wounded soldier Len, one of the Katz family.

After this first section the narrative moves forward more rapidly and more selectively; the focus shifts from one individual to another so that some characters drop out of

view for long stretches, to be picked up years later. The second section, covering the 1920s and early 1930s, brings the two families together through the surprising marriage of one of the members of the second generation, Benji Katz and Betty Gordon, but much of it follows the fortunes of the other two Gordon children, the emancipated Dorothy who curves out a career for herself, and the Cambridge-educated Francis who becomes a successful publisher.

In the third section, covering the period from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s, the themes of politics and antisemitism become much more prominent, with the rise of Nazism experienced at first-hand by Francis on a business trip to Germany; the activities of Nazi spies in blacklists; and the Second World War. Two members of the third generation also come into prominence here, Francis's sophisticated daughter Kitty, who goes to Oxford to read English, and Betty's much less refined daughter Dinah, who is nevertheless stimulated by Kitty's achievement to follow her example, and wins a scholarship to Cambridge. It is Dinah who dominates the final section as she makes her way, first through her undergraduate and postgraduate studies, and then through the phony liberalism of the Swinging Sixties, resisting the lure of what she recognizes to be the crypto-fascism of the student movement. After re-defining her Jewishness at the time of the Eichmann trial, she achieves personal integrity even though her marriage to a non-Jewish poet finally crumbles. She increasingly seems to resemble her aunt, Dorothy, and it is appropriate that, after a number of deaths in both families, the novel should end with Dorothy herself as archetypal survivor.

The note about Feinstein on the jacket points out that she was born in Bootle, brought up in Leicester, and studied in Cambridge. All three places feature prominently in the novel, and it seems probable that she has transmuted her family and personal history into fiction in *The Survivors*, which is full of insights into the changing patterns of Jewish life during this century. Yet in spite of this comprehensive sweep that the form of the family saga permits her, *The Survivors* is more satisfactory in its parts than as a whole. The two sections concentrating on the two independent women, Dorothy and Dinah, are particularly good, but even here the speed with which the narrative moves tends to preclude depth of understanding. At times, Feinstein seems to be trying to put a pallid, into a pint glass. Ever since *Law in the Rainbow*, the genre has proved very difficult to handle for serious purposes, and nowadays is associated mainly with popular, occasionally romantic, fiction. Feinstein made a gallant attempt to remedy this, in doing so she has sacrificed the more imaginative and even fantastic qualities of her recent fiction for pedestrian realism.

Atlantic approaches

By Victor Rothwell

TERRY H. ANDERSON:

The United States, Great Britain, and the Cold War 1944-47
256pp. University of Missouri Press.
£10.80
0 8262 0328 0

By beginning his book in 1944 Terry H. Anderson is able to show how the Anglophobe sentiments which had been widespread in the United States since the War of Independence and which partnership against Hitler had until then done little to diminish, were within the space of three years to be largely superseded by fear of communism and the Soviet Union. By 1947 the traditional American antipathy to British imperialism had snatched that, as the British ambassador in Washington wryly noted, sections of the United States press were complaining that Britain was proceeding too fast with de-colonization.

While he is mainly concerned with the interacting roles of the United States and Britain in the approach to the Cold War, Professor Anderson observes several times that Britain does not succeed in "guiding" the United States towards a policy of resisting further Soviet expansion, though he thinks that British leaders tried to do so. It was American perceptions of the Soviet threat which defeated the renewed isolationist impulse evident in the United States in 1945 and 1946, and not British skill in discussions with important Americans or in propaganda to the American people.

In so far as Britain acted in this period, it was through American awareness of the immense value, strategically and economically, once the British economy had got over the worst of its weaknesses with American aid, of Britain and its Common-

wealth and colonies as a reliable junior partner in world affairs.

Anderson's sensitive feeling for this aspect makes for a well-rounded picture of American foreign policy in those years. One of the most interesting features for the student of British foreign policy is to be reminded of just how volatile was the public mood in the United States, as measured by opinions polls and by election results, as well as by letters to Congress and the White House. Only 25 per cent of Americans pulled immediately after Churchill's Fulton speech in March 1946 supported his remarks, and Truman was dismayed by the deluge of hostile letters about the speech which his office received. Yet two months later 83 per cent of Americans were recorded as being in favour of the former Prime Minister's call for extreme vigilance against further Soviet expansion.

In November 1946 the American people elected a Republican Congress committed to massive cuts in public expenditure, including defence appropriations and funds for overseas relief. Yet this was the Congress which was to approve Marshall Aid and American rearmament. Foreign Office officials frequently described American public opinion as being utterly fickle, and had reservations about making British security heavily dependent on such a country if there were alternatives, especially given that, as they saw it, the American political system made administrations, no matter how enlightened themselves, much more susceptible to shifts in public opinion than their British counterparts.

The book does not really succeed on its British side. This is primarily because of the distortions which so often stem from largely ignoring all but one of a number of closely related themes. In this case the omissions, except for passing references, are British-Soviet bilateral relations and British interest in setting up a

West European security group (there was a policy decision not to use the word "bloc") without American membership. Anderson sees British foreign-policy-makers as unambiguously convinced of Soviet ill-will and hostility from the time in March 1945 when it became clear that Stalin had no intention of genuinely implementing the Yalta agreement on Poland. From then on it was simply a case of offering Britain's services to Washington as a staunch ally in the containment of communist expansion.

Only Churchill's attitude during his last months as Prime Minister really fitted this description. Otherwise it oversimplifies British policy towards the United States and the Soviet Union both before and after the speedy Soviet betrayal of the spirit of the agreement on Poland and even the letter of its companion, the Declaration on Liberated Europe, which provided for consultations between the three major powers in the rest of liberated Europe before one whose troops were in occupation of so thought that the made major political changes there. The Soviet Union's unilateral installation of a new government in Romania in March 1945 was obviously incompatible with the Declaration.

These events did not come as a great surprise to most of those concerned with the making of British foreign policy. During the war they had not been totally unaffected by the tendency towards uncritical admiration of the Soviet Union which existed among much of the British public. However, they were resigned to Russian demands for a sphere of influence in most of Eastern Europe, and Churchill himself had attempted such an agreement with Stalin in Moscow in October 1944. They also thought that the anti-communist Poles had facilitated their own downfall by spurning British efforts to mediate between them

and Stalin while Russia was still hard-pressed to keep up the momentum of its war effort. As the war ended, the attitude among officials remained one of suspended judgment about Stalin's eventual intentions.

After the war, Bevin, virtually the autocrat of British foreign policy under the new Labour Government, continued to hope for a restoration of cordial relations with the Soviet Union until late in 1947 on the basis of the Russians, confining themselves to the area of the Red Army's wartime conquests, excluding the Soviet zones of Germany and Austria which would be incorporated into permanently disarmed and decentralized German and Austrian states. His occasional truces, such as that against Vyshinsky, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, at the special session of the United Nations Security Council in London early in 1946, must be set against a number of public and private olive branches to Stalin which were the despair of some of his own officials, especially when they threatened to delay Anglo-American cooperation to relieve the desperate economic plight of western Germany, with its impossible financial burdens on Britain.

While acknowledging that a Western European group of Britain, France and the smaller democratic countries (and perhaps also Portugal but not Spain) would be a second-best to a United States guarantee of Western European security, Bevin and his officials until 1948 remained deeply

septical about whether America would even temporarily go so far, and thought that the West European group might be Britain's best hope for security unless it was proved that the United States had permanently abandoned isolationism.

Professor Anderson is therefore interesting but basically somewhat misleading on postwar British foreign policy. Even so, he has much to offer in that field, including a convincing demolition of the theory, advanced from time to time, that the withdrawal of British aid from Greece and Turkey early in 1947, which precipitated the Truman Doctrine, was carried out by Bevin and the Foreign Office as a calculated move to force America into a firm security commitment in the Old World. It would accord well with his thesis if that had been the case, but he shows that it was not.

There is one irritating feature in this generally pleasing book. Like many who have used the Foreign Office records since the advent of the thirty-year rule, Professor Anderson cites documents by their original numbers. Historians who do this are erecting an unnecessary barrier between their sources and their readers. It means that those who wish to pursue such references, and whose time at the Public Record Office may well be limited, must spend some of that time looking up the office's own classifications before documents can be requested. It is a senseless practice which ought to cease.

Under pressure

By Esmond Wright

GRAHAM K. WILSON:

Interest Groups in the United States
161pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £12.95 (paperback, £4.95).
0 19 827425 4

Ever since the foundation of the Republic, interest groups have been held to be a major feature of, and a major threat to, the American democratic system. Indeed, the best-known essay in *The Federalist Papers* of 1788, essay number ten, is a standard indictment of what Madison called "faction", and he went on to rest his own constitutionalism on a balancing off of one group or class or interest against another, on intricately devised and carefully-overlapping system guaranteeing that force would offset force, and that ambition would counter ambition. Reinforced by the weakness of the party-system and by the impugning of racial and linguistic groups, pluralism has from that time on been held to be the norm in American democracy. Lobbies and interest groups in so large a society, and so ungoverned a society, have been accepted as inevitable. Almost every American text-book on government has its chapter on pressure or interest groups.

Graham Wilson is thus working a well-worn field. But his book, though it runs to only 150 pages, is thoroughly researched, well-written, and fresh in its conclusions. His thesis is that such a pattern of vigorous lobbies has actually only recently come into existence. Until now, the many groups, however representative of interests or sections, have in fact been weak and poorly organized. The majority of companies, even the largest of them, made little contact with Congress at all. The big and powerful lobbies of an earlier day - the NAM, the Chamber of Commerce, the AFA, the AFL-CIO - have become conservative and were always or nearly always of the side of the status quo.

The technical expertise of all the major business groups has now, however, been improved beyond recognition, and political action committees channel campaign funds to their friends - in 1978 there were over 750 of them - created by companies supplying funds equivalent to 15 per cent of all campaign contributions. Not to be outdone, the AFL-CIO's

Committee on Political Education (COPE) is now formidable: in the 1976 election it provided 120,000 volunteers, 20,000 telephones and a computer system that gave to the committee it endorsed the names and addresses of 11 million union members. As power in the Congress has become diffuse, as "amateur" laws have opened committee hearings to public scrutiny, as the increase in the number of primaries has made interest groups more important to candidates, the number and skill of lobbyists and lobbies have steadily increased. Concern with pollution and the environment, Watergate, Common Cause and Ralph Nader's Public Citizen Foundation all testify to the value of public policy bodies and of single interest crusades. These have opened on Congress almost irresistible party-leads. All have had direct access anyway to branches of the Executive as well as to Congress, and the Executive has responded, with a revived Federal Trade Commission, and newly created agencies (the Federal Elections Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.) There is a daunting sophistication and there is now a genuine pluralism at work.

Up-to-date as it is, the book is nevertheless a product of the Jimmy Carter world; and as epilogue on the impact of the Reagan victory of 1980 would have been interesting and revealing. A table or two giving a list of the top lobbying groups and their expenditures should also have been valuable, and not difficult to call from the Congressional Quarterly Service. There are interesting references to the ITT's involvement in Chile, but some areas of lobbying are totally ignored: a study of a model drawn - for instance - from the part played by lobbies in securing the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, would have strengthened this survey. By revealing the process presented in obtaining support for legislation, rather than opposing it, not only is the cause of Civil Rights ignored but so are professional groups like the American Bar Association or the AMA and Medicine, and the British reader inevitably looks for a final chapter comparing the British and American systems.

In asking for more, however, one is but paying a tribute to the quality of Dr Wilson's study. This is an excellent and concise survey of a vast and complex field.

The politics of decline

By Alan Angell

M. H. J. FINCH:

A Political Economy of Uruguay
Since 1870
339pp. Macmillan. £20.
0 333 27852 6

The dust-jacket of this book shows a terrified civilian covering on the ground surrounded by a half-dozen or so heavily armed soldiers or policemen. This may seem an odd illustration for a study in the realm of political economy, but it is sadly only too appropriate. Henry Finch's argument is that the Uruguayan economy developed such structural rigidities, and that the prevailing political system was so incapable of doing more than distribute rapidly dwindling patronage, that only a simultaneous restructuring of both the political and economic systems could break the deadlock. The tragedy is that the path chosen was a combination of brutal repression and, in theory at least, free-market economics: the irony that the likely outcome will simply intensify those factors which gave rise to the original crisis.

The author's attempt to provide a coherent conceptual guide to the politics of decline, from a well-organized welfare state to a stagnant corrupt one and finally to the present authoritarianism, does not work as well as his excellent account of the economy. Poulantzas's theory of the state is invoked to explain the workings of a political system relatively independent of the economically dominant agrarian sector. Fortunately, this idea is not pursued too relentlessly; for it raises as many, if not more, questions than it answers. How relevant? How autonomous? At times the landowners appear as politically weak (because they commanded few votes than urban interests) and at other times as not so much weak as

misdirecting their political strength towards short-term economic objectives instead of taking a long-term view of the low and declining output of the largely pastoral economy.

In the end, Finch's "relative autonomy" thesis seems to amount to little more than the proposition that the link between economic influence and political power is indirect and complex. If undeniable, dealing with the military regime since 1973 he serves the armed forces as a higher servant of the interests of capital than the various capitalist groups themselves (farmers, bankers and industrialists), because it is the one group capable of taking a long-term and detached view. No doubt the armed forces themselves would accept this as long as the interests of capital were also identified with those of the nation. But the author's analysis makes it fairly plain that there is very little likelihood of their strategy working; his concluding words are that "the irony of [the military's] economic model is that in attempting to secure the possible advantages of a deepened form of dependency it seems likely to achieve only an accentuation of the economy's vulnerability." This surely contradicts part of his earlier analysis. If the system broke down because dominant economic groups lacked political power, and because they took a short-sighted view of policy-making, why does it not work now that a group possesses absolute power and is able to take a long-term view? This is a question that faces not only the Uruguayan military, but similar regimes in Chile and Brazil, and to a lesser extent those of Peru (where they have given up trying to answer the question) and Argentina (where they hold on to political power by far less certain).

So how could such a pleasant country be reduced to its present state of bitterness and savagery? The question should provoke curiosity as well as revulsion. This book is indispensable for understanding the roots of military authoritarianism in Uruguay.

Any attempt to understand the present crisis of authoritarianism in Latin America must rest heavily on an account of recent economic development, and here Finch has provided a stimulating analysis that is provocative and the product of admirably painstaking research. By

Parallels and influences

By Christopher Hill

HUGH M. RICHMOND:
Puritans and Libertines
Anglo-French Literary Relations in
the Reformation
401pp. University of California
Press. £19.25.
0 520 04179 8

Hugh M. Richmond's book has been a labour of love, the product of many years' intense study of sixteenth and early seventeenth-century French literature and its influences on England. His thesis is that "the great literature of Renaissance France evolved under the pressures of intense adversary relations generated by religious controversy, and that English literature profited from the exciting new distortions of behaviour, ideas, values and personality which resulted". He believes that Italian - and especially Petrarchan - influences on sixteenth-century English literature have been over-estimated, and argues that French influences were of more direct significance. This is a heavily corrective, though Richmond possibly exaggerates the continuing hold of the Italian thesis in English criticism.

He starts by stressing the influence of Marguerite de Navarre and her *Heptameron*. Anne Boleyn had been educated at the court of Navarre, and part of her attraction for Henry VIII and his court derived from her introduction to England of this sophisticated French culture which she knew so well. It was a culture which allowed unusual intellectual and sexual freedom to ladies. In particular Queen Anne exercised a strong influence over Sir Thomas Wyatt, and through his poetry the new culture entered the main stream of English literature. "Wyatt is a memorable poet for exactly the opposite reason to that usually alleged: not because he imported Petrarch into England but because he showed the irrelevance of Petrarchan conventions to the great

amateur issues of his life and society, even if he found himself trapped within that archaic frame."

Richmond also interestingly emphasizes "the new range of psychological awareness in part opened by the shattering impact of the Reformation. The Reformation 'undercut the seriousness of traditional metaphysics' and 'restored psychological discontinuity as a proper approach to the human mind's propensity to failure and potentiality for unpredictable grace'. But the Reformation did not happen only - or even chiefly - in France. Richmond does not appear to have read A. G. Dickens's demonstration of the deep Lollard roots of puritanism and libertinism in England. He attributes much to specific French influences that might equally well derive from a common pool of protestant ideas to which English, Dutch and Flemish French. It is indeed important to stress the break in sensibility that the Reformation made, but protestantism was not a unique phenomenon. The new geographical discoveries, and the invention of printing, had no less deep-reaching consequences. More's *Utopia* was not a protestant document, but it opened up new ranges of possibility to the imagination. So, in a different way, did Machiavelli. Richmond does not mention Hiram Haydn's trail-blazing *The Counter-Reformation* of 1950, though some of the historical works on which he relies are even more dated.

Richmond is at his most interesting when discussing his chosen French authors and works, particularly the *Heptameron*, Marot, Ronsard and D'Aubigné, whose influence is good to see recognized. His book would be worth reading for these chapters alone. He suggests parallels between Ronsard and Jonson (who mentioned Ronsard), and on Donne, George Herbert, Milton and Marvell are a good deal more speculative. Indeed his search for parallels and influences seems to be less and less convincing as he advances in time from Wyatt.

Of course, if you are as well read in sixteenth-century French literature as Professor Richmond is and you look for French sources for everything that Shakespeare wrote, you will find a number of possible parallels. But it is really necessary to suppose that Shakespeare went to the *Heptameron* for the idea that "the better to be vile than vile esteemed" or for "They that have power to hurt and will do none... They lightly do inherit Heaven's graces"? Or that Pyramus and Thisbe in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* derive from Marot? Nor is it really very illuminating, when Poinc charges Falstaff with eating meat on a Friday, to recall that a similar accusation was made against Marot. Again, what are we to make of the statement that "without the self-assertion of Marot and Ronsard in the face of their opponents, Donne and Milton would have lacked precedents for their own self-development"? Or that the "last, sardonic phase" of Shakespeare's sonnets, "dealing with the Dark Lady, also probably depends directly on the *Heptameron*"? "Shakespeare's 'sympathetic discussion of wife-murder' in the *Heptameron* but to claim that its author's 'consistent suspicion of masks and makeup is a plausible source for Shakespeare's own frequent association of them with viciousness, sensuality, or at least ominous passion' suggests that Shakespeare was incapable of observing his own society.

It is, again, a plausible suggestion that Marguerite de Navarre's court, and Marot's praise of dark beauties, "did a great deal to establish" an "alternative feminine ideal", but it is less plausible to look forward from them to "the dusky beauty of the sardonic Rosaline" in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Nevertheless, Richmond's chapter on *Love's Labour's Lost* is useful. It relates the play closely to French political events. Like many of his points, this is perhaps not so original as he claims, but it is well worked out, in some detail. But is it evidence of French cultural influence? The English public was pas-

sionately interested in Henry of Navarre and the cause of the French Huguenots at the time; support for Solidarity in England today could hardly be used to demonstrate Polish cultural influences.

The case is similar with Milton and Marvell. That Milton had read Du Bartas and Marvell Saint-Amant is well established: no doubt they read other seventeenth-century French poets. But the tracking of parallels, though an interesting scholarly exercise, tells us nothing about the origins of these poets' ideas. It is as impossible to prove as to disprove that "the complex authorial personae in *Paradise Lost* and *Upon Appleton House* owe a great deal to the defensive tactics developed by Marot, Ronsard, D'Aubigné and Théophile in the course of protracted religious, political and amatory controversies: they are introverted, self-sufficient, and increasingly quietist" (though one might query whether either Milton or Marvell became "increasingly quietist"). Milton hardly needed to read Marot to learn about the ecclesiastical abuses he denounced in *Lycidas*. By the time Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, over a century of European protestant thinking was at his disposal, much of it in English; French influences were very subsidiary.

Hugh Richmond suggests interesting analogies between D'Aubigné's and Milton's epics. But need we postulate direct influence? As Judith Sproxton persuasively argues in the current *Journal of European Studies*, both poets were protestants seeking to explain the defeat of a cause they had believed to be God's. It would have been astonishing if similar causes had not produced similar effects.

There is an interesting, if rather slight, chapter on seventeenth-century French libertines - Théophile de Viau, Jacques Vallée des Barreaux. Richmond may or may not be right to trace their influence on Suckling and Waller. But Marvell did not need to read French libertines to get the idea that "all comes by nature". He could

have found it closer to hand in English radicals who were free to write in the 1640s and 1650s than in the 1640s and 1650s. There is as little need to seek Marot's sources, French or other, for Marot's sense of the existence of important historical forces, "the force of age contemporaries he got that from his first-hand experience of living through a revolution. The *carpe diem* which underlies 'To his coy mistress' can be found in Ronsard and Du Barreaux, as it can be found in some of other poets. But the twist which Marvell gives to this traditional theme is his own.

Nevertheless the book is well worth reading. It will tell students of sixteenth-century English literature more than they did not know about French literature, and will perhaps lead to the discarding of some hoary truisms. The chapter on Anne Boleyn's influence on Wyatt is important. Professor Richmond's emphasis on the psychological consequences of the Reformation for literature is stimulating and worth thinking about. I myself feel that his focus is too narrow: he says very little about Montaigne, for instance, though his influence on sixteenth and early seventeenth-century English writers was arguably greater than that of any of the figures Richmond studies.

If the book makes students of English literature more aware of French influences, it will not be written in vain. Richmond's demonstration of ways in which sixteenth-century French poets broke through to new areas of sensibility is valuable. But in the last resort modern literary history is an unexcusable as any other kind of monoculturalism. Books seem important to scholars, but poets did not live in libraries. Shakespeare enjoyed the rapidly changing society; Milton and Marvell experienced their own civil wars, and helped to make the politics of their day. In literature, at least, environment is more important than inheritance.

AFRICAN ART

Transforming the obvious

By J. B. Donne

SUSAN VOGEL (Editor):
For Spirits and Kings
African Art from the Tishman Collection

166pp with 42 colour plates and 217 black-and-white illustrations. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art (distributed by Harry N. Abrams Inc). \$14.94.
0 87099 267 8

It is debatable whether we are yet in a position to discuss the "history" of African art. The term itself, derived as it is from the European classical tradition, is open to dispute when used in an African context. The generic concept of "art" does not come naturally to African ways of thought, and those figure-carvings and masks that are so highly and justly admired as works of art in private and public collections throughout the rest of the world may well have an animist or social or ritual significance in their African setting which transcends by far their aesthetic appeal. Africans prefer to express their artistic sensibilities in the appreciation of woven cloth, a piece of jewellery, pottery, or a carved stool, all of which we tend to thrust higgledy-piggledy into the rag-bag of "minor arts".

Any study of African art soon runs into the quicksands of uncertainty where archaeologists and historians are still undecided about such fundamental problems as the introduction of the Iron Age and the directions of Bantu dispersion. Even in Nigeria, where an enormous amount of fieldwork has been carried out, the proposed line of continuity from the Nok Culture (5th century BC to 2nd century AD), through Ife (*Ilorin* 12th-15th centuries) and Benin (15th century or earlier; to 1897), down to the traditional Yoruba carvings still

being produced today, is highly speculative. Moreover, the technically superb and wonderfully intricate bronze work in a completely individual style found at Igbo-Ukwu, a hundred miles east of Benin, and dated between the 8th and 10th centuries, awkwardly intrudes into the gap of a thousand years and several hundred miles which separate Nok from Ife.

Only in the past twenty-five years have art historians, especially in North America, concentrated their studies on Africa. In 1957, Roy Sieber, now doyen of African art history in the United States, presented his doctoral thesis on "African tribal sculpture"; the following year, William Fagg, then Deputy Keeper of the Department of Ethnography at the British Museum, published his monumental and revised *Sculpture of Africa*, which renewed and revitalized the study of the subject. At about this time, in New York, Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller opened his own collection to the public by founding the Museum of Primitive Art on West 54th Street, with the art historian, Robert Goldwater, as its first Director.

It was in the late 1950s, too, that Paul Tishman's interests as a collector turned from Pre-Columbian and modern art towards Africa. His earliest acquisitions were an ivory lady-in-waiting and a bronze helmet mask for the Oduduwa rite, both from the city of Benin. Since then, with the guidance particularly of Roy Sieber and William Fagg, he has greatly extended the collection while maintaining its extremely high quality. In 1966, a selection of 135 pieces met an exhibition at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. This was followed by further exhibitions in Jerusalem and many cities in the United States, culminating recently in a display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art of 150 pieces selected from a total of some 350 in the collection. Of these, sixty are attributed in the catalogue

to Nigeria, reflecting the expertise of Tishman's principal advisers, *For Spirits and Kings*, edited by Susan Vogel, Curator of the African collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, illustrates all 150 works, sometimes accompanied by field photographs, with comments from some seventy of the world's experts on particular areas. These include half-a-dozen Africans, while the rest are drawn almost equally from Europe and North America.



Ovimbundu staff, a carving from Angora. From the book reviewed here.

The exhibition and its catalogue therefore reflect, on the one hand the present fashions in African art, and on the other the present state of scholarly interest and knowledge. The geographical range is impressive, though concentrated in West and Central Africa. North Africa is omitted completely, as is to be expected in a collection of mainly figure sculpture and masks (though some rare and perhaps not very appealing masks are to be found north of the Sahara). East and Southern Africa are represented by an important grave figure from the Malagasy Republic; a fine stone-figure attributed to Great Zimbabwe, and a rather

typical but delightful Nguni figure from Natal.

The sheer quality, almost without exception, of the individual pieces in the collection is overwhelming, and is a tribute to Tishman's personal taste and to his judicious use of expertise. To take the example of Baule and Senufo carving, where the studied beauty of the one and the often soft lines of the other make too immediate an appeal to the eye, he has chosen pieces in which the simplicity and severity of form and the stripping of a style to its essentials transform the obvious into perfection.

The classical styles of court art appear to predominate over the more fantastic objects that in the past appealed to artists and collectors alike. But there are some exhilarating new discoveries. The great Ife gruesome life-size statue from the Cumeron Grasslands of a seated king returned from battle, with his sword in one hand and a human head in the other, is probably unique. A fine small figure of an executioner in a similar pose comes from the Fon of the Benin Republic (formerly Dahomey), among whom such excellence is a rarity. An Asante maternity figure is a superb example of what in itself is a common enough subject. The famous names appear - Dogon and Benin and Yoruba, Fang, Kongo, Kuba and Luba - but so do those of the lesser known Bassa, Attie, Urhobo, Tiv, Tsogo and Wongo.

In the present situation, where generalizations are likely to be so quickly overtaken by new data, extended captions attached to a body of photographs based on an exhibition provide a most useful and practical method of publishing and disseminating recent findings. But the idea of inviting some seventy experts to present their knowledge and opinions of individual masterpieces (and on occasion one piece is discussed by

two experts) is both novel and fruitful, although the rewards vary considerably depending not only on the investigator's own interests, but also on what can and what cannot any longer be found out. In the case of Yoruba sculpture, studies are continuing in the attribution of pieces to particular hands and the rediscovery of the families and individual names of carvers. Much work, too, is being done to reveal the mythology behind the iconography of Yoruba. With regard to the Senufo, the meaning of the indigenous terms used by the masking societies, so often misunderstood and therefore misapplied to now, is at last being clarified. But the contributors to *For Spirits and Kings* also indicate the limitations of present knowledge: the expert who has here attributed the figure of a European (no 86) to the Ijo of Southern Nigeria has since stated that it might be a Bissagos Islands, over 1,500 miles away. Such academic honesty is welcome, following the wilder assertions and interpretations presented in the past.

When a collection is devoted almost entirely to the plastic arts (there is one piece of Kuba raffia cloth among the selection), it may seem inconsequent to point to the apparent lack of interest in other art forms. But this seems to typify a trend among many collectors, who have not yet responded to the recent excellent scholarly publications and museum exhibitions devoted, for example, to African textiles and metalwork. The exhibition catalogue has therefore to exclude these fields, although several of the contributors have done most important work in these over the past decade. Despite this limitation, *For Spirits and Kings* serves as a valuable interim report on the present state of African art studies, as well as providing an important fund of new and detailed information which will greatly add to the general body of knowledge.

Actaeon and Ixion

By Terence Cave

GISELE MATHIEU-CASTELLANI:
Mythes de l'éros baroque
255pp. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France
2 13 036635 X

DAVID LEE RUBIN:
The Knot of Actaeon
A Poetic of the French Lyric in the Early 17th Century
109pp. Columbus: Ohio State University Press. \$11.
0 8142 0322 1

The baroque was the last of the great unexplored territories of French literature. In particular, it was the last chance for scholars to make their academic fortune by "discovering" a major poet, as Alan Bosse had discovered Sponde in the 1930s. Some twenty years ago, articles were still regularly appearing under titles such as "Un grand poète inconnu" (even, if I remember rightly, "Encore un grand poète inconnu"). In the event, however, what was discovered was that there were a large number of quite interesting minor poets writing in France between 1570 and 1630; that, therefore, it was difficult to classify, being linked by no common purpose, theory, or manifesto; and that the only way to make the occasional successes available to a wider public was to anthologize them. Thus Gisele Mathieu-Castellani herself has recently produced a collection entitled *Le baroque in the 10/18 series*.

These two new studies present an almost exemplary contrast in their approach to what is now a moderately well-mapped landscape. Gisele Mathieu-Castellani begins with the tradition established by Jean

l'âge baroque en France (1954) in that she chooses themes claimed to be characteristic of a baroque sensibility. These themes - hubris, metamorphosis, dream, and the like - are in their turn displayed by examples of mythological figures. David Rubin on the other hand, alighting himself with the American "neo-Aristotelians" (Crane, Olson, Cleanth Brooks, Bernard Weinberg), prefers to subject a small group of poems to detailed formal analysis. Mathieu-Castellani's approach is, to use Rubin's terminology, "integrative", using individual poems and poems as examples of a dominant thematic (and even psycho-analytic) pattern; Rubin's is "differentiated". Both, however, widen the scope of their argument from time to time by listing further examples for the reader to consult (Mathieu-Castellani here has the advantage that she can refer to her own anthology).

Although neither author is primarily interested in pressing a historical argument, they are both aware that their choice of materials and their stress on common features have historical implications. Developing the conclusions of her thesis *Les thèmes amoureux dans la poésie française 1570-1600* (1975), Mathieu-Castellani sees the new wave of Petrarchism that began in the 1570s as establishing distinctive uses of myth and distinctive thematic patterns. In her view, the neo-Petrarchists understand mythology not as a language embodying pre-established moral and didactic meanings, but as a set of figures which their own poetic language can deflect and reorder ("un discours sur le mythe"); thus Prometheus, Sisyphus, and Icarus are personifications of *amorous* hubris and erotic cynicism. These figures are shown to recur from poet to poet, expressing an individualized and obsessive experience of the world (and

Petrarchan) frustration of the lover's desire. The voyeuristic fantasies enacted by Actaeon, the conjunction of fascination and horror associated with erotic transgression in the myths of Ixion and Medusa, an implicit homosexuality towards Narcissism or a specifically baroque pathology: "les mythes nous donnent à lire une angouille qui nous paraît être au centre de l'érotique baroque."

Rubin's historical hypothesis, to which he devotes his brief conclusion, is that mid-sixteenth century poetry either impose a viable structure of argument or narrative on their poems, or fall totally; early seventeenth-century poets, by contrast, seem to construct their poems loosely and even incoherently, but can be shown to exploit half-hidden thematic and figurative patterns by means of which, in the end, the poem may be read as an integral whole. His initial taxonomy of forms - three types of "consecutive unity", three types of "non-consecutive unity" - leads him to distinguish between two broad categories of seventeenth-century lyric. In the first part of his study, he looks at poems by Malherbe, Saint-Amant, and Théophile de Viau, where an apparently disrupted argument is redeemed by second-order coherence. In the second part, "non-consecutive" lyrics by Maynard, Sologan, and Théophile are similarly tested for disguised modes of unity. Rubin thus attempts to go beyond the claim, put forward by Odette de Mourgues and others, that baroque form is characteristically pyramidal and disjointed.

One can immediately think of objections to the historical aspects of both accounts. Ronsard's poems on Actaeon, Prometheus, Ixion, and Medusa, on dream and metamorphosis, would seem to anticipate

many of Mathieu-Castellani's "baroque" anxieties and obsessions. She claims, for instance, that "malgré que les ronsardiens s'attachaient à décrire la déception et la 'vergogne' du réveil lorsqu'il se réveille il s'aperçoit que le songe est mensonge. Les poètes baroques se soumettent à la fascination onirique..."; but the stress on disillusionment and deception is characteristic rather of Ronsard's *Sonnets pour Hélène*, written during the first wave of neo-Petrarchism, than of his early *Amours*, in which the pleasures of the dream prevail. She is also unable to give a satisfactory account of the difference between the erotic taste embodied in the mid-sixteenth century cult of Diana and parallel features of neo-Petrarchism (it is ironic that the picture chosen for the cover of her anthology is Bronzino's "Venus, Cupid, Folly, and Time", a painting executed in the first half of the sixteenth century and presented to François Ier). Rubin, for his part, could be accused of ignoring Ronsard's longer lyric poems, which might have rendered examples of two-level coherence; indeed, the ode as a genre is characterized by a combination of disjunctive argument and associative thematic patterning, and that a more detailed demonstration of the specific character of seventeenth-century lyric form would seem to be called for.

Rubin concedes, however, that "to produce a *naïveté* history of French lyric forms between 1550 and 1630 will demand further study on a massive scale." His main purpose is to persuade us to apply rigorous criteria in examining the forms of the baroque lyric, and above all to study these poems not as samples of, for their own sake, and in their own nature. His concise, austere style is relieved by touches of dry wit: operas like a surgical instrument,

lying here the mechanisms behind the imaginative and formal luxuries of his poems: in his virtuous deduction of the way in which, in a "disrupted" lyric like Théophile's *Le Moine*, "the violation of the literary rule is not merely appropriate but absolutely indispensable to the coherence of the poem", he demonstrates that a method some would claim to be outdated is capable of insights as probing as those of more recent theories and approaches.

The value of Mathieu-Castellani's interpretative procedure is that it attributes depth of meaning to a large body of poetry often thought to be artificial and superficial. It is true that she lapses at times into the more simplistic forms of Freudian allegory (Ixion's wheel is a "symbolic figure", the culture an "image de la mère"); Lacan's emphasis on the linguistic character of psychoanalytic materials - which she wholly disregards - would have provided a useful corrective, and is in many ways suited to this highly contextualized and self-nourishing poetry. As a companion volume to her anthology, *Mythes de l'éros baroque* amply illustrates the pleasures of the neo-Petrarchist text. Actaeon and Ixion act out everyone's favourite obsessions and anxieties (though only a francophone Ixion would get the pun in "présent" is "one's own plaisir").

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Time of troubles

By Chinweizu

BUCHI EMECHETA

Destinallan Biafra

259pp. Allison and Busby. £9.95.
0 85031 409 7

One is entitled to expect from a work which advertises itself as historical fiction, an imaginative treatment which takes one behind the news headlines or the summaries of chronicles in such a way that one gets a feel for the historical times, places, events and characters on which the fiction is based. Buchi Emecheta certainly crams every bit of news from twelve years of Nigeria's turbulent politics and civil war into *Destinallan Biafra*: elections, independence celebrations, coups, diplomatic wranglings, pogroms, battlefield mayhem, the havoc of war on villages, starvation, relief operations, international protests - nothing is left out. But where is the imaginative treatment? Certainly not in the crudely conflated events and personages; nor in the undisguised propaganda and rumour. It is as though the fictional element makes its appearance, in the form of the improbable adventures of the novel's heroine and hero (an Oxford-educated Nigerian girl and an English political agent and spy for whom she

doubles as lover and assistant), only in the face of the obvious difficulty of holding so much semi-factual material together.

These two protagonists seem to be superhuman. Debbie Ogaemba is a spoilt brat who appears to see war and high politics as merely a continuation of undergraduate pranks. Joining the Nigerian army in a time of coups, she rounds up some official for an exercise which turns into a massacre. Though initially distraught at this bloody result, she quickly recovers and plunges into the next adventure that is suggested to her. She is sent by her English lover to dissuade her old friend, the rebel leader, from seceding. After many violent experiences, she arrives in Biafra long after her mission has become pointless, switches sides and undertakes a propaganda mission for the secessionists. Arriving in London, she singlehandedly whips up a massive demonstration in Trafalgar Square; dashes over to Germany to bring a leatherful of animal blood at Britain's pro-Nigeria Prime Minister who is visiting there; flies back to London where she switches sides (or is it sympathies?) again and is sent by her lover back into Biafra to assassinate the rebel leader. Waiting for her opportunity, she kills him by writing a book to be called, believe it or not, *Destinallan Biafra*. Her lover, Alan Grey, is an equally improbable superman who, while ostensibly

collecting artworks for export, singlehandedly choreographs the civil war.

All this makes the story telling as elegant and assured as trying to break a thousand branches all at once. *Destinallan Biafra* does convey the feel of the experience that was Biafra. All it does is leave one wondering why it falls so devastatingly below the quality of Buchi Emecheta's previous works.

It is not, of course, that so much cannot be triumphantly told, even in such small space; it is rather that to tell it well requires a different and disciplined talent. To do justice to her material would require the vast scope of Tolstoy in *War and Peace*, the synoptic powers of Gabriel Garcia Marquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, or Margaret Mitchell's judicious selection of a representative microcosm in *Gone With the Wind*. A writer whose reputation has been made with fictionalized autobiography must recognize that a leap to historical fiction, and especially to the large canvas of tumultuous public history, may not be easy and may call for a different apprenticeship.

Africans - and indeed all others - who want to see more African women writers and see them bring their insight to non-matrimonial themes, would be pleased if, in her next work, Buchi Emecheta shows that she has mastered the craft her new interest calls for.

Between two worlds

By Dennis Duerden

WOLE SOYINKA

Ak4, the years of childhood
250pp. Rex Collings. £7.50.
0 86036 155 1

Wole Soyinka's fame outside Africa was extended in the mid-1960s by the general critical acclaim which greeted the production of his plays on the London stage, and soon afterwards his travels in a Nigerian jail during the Biafran war attracted the daily attention of the world's press. After he had survived this ordeal, including a year in solitary confinement, he wrote an adaptation of *The Bacchae* of Euripides for production at the National Theatre in London, a fact to remember when reading this book.

Ak4, the years of childhood describes the first twelve years of Soyinka's life, including his experiences at a primary school and at Abokuta Grammar School. His father was headmaster of the primary school and his uncle, whose wife led a historically important women's up-

rising, was head of the grammar school. However, Soyinka was greeted by the *Alaké*, the king of Abokuta, as a relative, and therefore grew up in two worlds, that of the strictly Christian teachings of his father, and that of the traditional beliefs of a grandfather who "cut his ankles" and initiated him into some of the mysteries of the cult of Ogun, a leader of the Yoruba demi-gods. One of the outstanding features of this book is its description of the constant intrusion of the world of "pagan" belief into the author's early life as a member of a Christian family. He describes how his belief in the ghosts of the local ancestors was so real that he actually talked to the ghost of Bishop Aiyi Crowther in the old rectory and how the ghost showed him his watch on a silver chain taken from his waistcoat pocket. Similarly his Uncle Sanya had been punished when a child for up-setting the spirits by persisting in searching for snails to eat in an area which was acknowledged to be the spirits' territory. Witchcraft and sorcery were a constant threat from rivals to Soyinka's and his contemporaries' success in examinations; or were used by the opposition to try to thwart his aunt's political aims.

The letter is an important component of the last part of the book. Soyinka was used by the women as a willing messenger and was able to satisfy his avid curiosity about rebellion against discriminatory laws in 1945. The women succeeded in forcing the deposition of the *Alaké*. Soyinka's eye-witness description of the way in which a women's rebellion in fact began from an alliance between the educated middle-class women and the market women tried to educate in an invaluable historical document. The book illustrates the traditional power of women in West African society; for example, the dominating influence of his mother, Wild Christine, on his schoolmaster's family; and the restraint she exercised on the women's political movement. It also shows the recognition by the male leaders in the society that the women's intervention was legitimate. They said that it had been predicted by Ifa, god of fate, and that it happened during the reign of every fifth or fourteenth king.

Soyinka's vivid and lucid account of his childhood is, *inter alia*, an invaluable source for an understanding of his work as a dramatist, demonstrating his reasons for making an adaptation of *The Bacchae*, and for the important part played by the women in his other works. *Kongi's Harvest* for example.

Then

Then we believed we were at home and if the golf course hid gangs of black burglars then the streets were full of dancing policemen. The sun put a blow-torch to the iron roofs and the flakes came floating like leaves. They were disciplined seasons, then. The dust obeyed the winds and the winds never changed, driving the lost cattle of sandy streets home before them. And when the dust settled the big dogs got busy on any strangers, and left their remains for the dancing policemen. I suppose this went on even after the time we first glimpsed revolvers in drawers, oiled iron lying with father's innocent socks, even after the time we were tall enough to reach the windows, perhaps when we were learning to count by locks. Then suddenly the moon stood outside the window one night showing an ashen face, shocked to discover that it was really Africa we were in, then it was the last white policeman.

Christopher Hope

Veldtanschaauung

By Geoffrey Wheatcroft

THEODOR HANF, HERIBERT WEILAND and GERDA VIERDAG

South Africa: The Prospects of Peaceful Change
492pp. Rex Collings. £15.
0 86 036 144 6

DAVID HARRISON

The White Tribe of Africa
South Africa in perspective
307pp. British Broadcasting Corporation. £9.95.
0 563 17838 8

GORDON WINTER

Inside BOSS
South Africa's Secret Police
640pp. Allen Lane. £7.95 (Penguin).
0 7139 1391 6

More than eighty years ago Winston Churchill said that South Africa was a "land of lies". No other country's history is such a web of evasion and myth, still to be unraveled. Episodes which come to mind are the early migration of the Xhosa peoples and the Jameson Raid (the parliamentary inquiry into which was known at the time as the "Lying in State at Westminster"). Dishonesty, tendentiousness, *portis* and delusion still characterize the discussion of present-day South Africa. And that in turn affects writing about the future of the country - of which it may be said that there has anyway been too much. Among the worst offenders are liberal and radical opponents of the apartheid regime. It goes without saying that any "info" emanating from Pretoria should be taken with a pinch of salt. Equally, however, oppositionist writing should be read sceptically. The form which dishonesty most commonly takes is groundless optimism. Leave aside the disreputable Stalinist (as opposed to the reputable neo-Marxist) school of analysis, which has consistently got South Africa wrong. Look only at the liberals. In *South Africa: Crisis for the West* (published in 1964), for example, Colin and Margaret Legum wrote that "there is no chance whatever that the present anti-communist white government can be sustained in power for more than a few years", and more specifically, "... perhaps two or three years before the collapse of Angola; and another year for Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia. Thus one would fix the crisis point [for South Africa] at between 1966-68."

The failure of past predictions has not dulled the enthusiasm for prophecy and analysis. Indeed, the spate of books on South Africa seems fuller than ever. They tend to have metaphorical and often interrogative titles. Gwendolen Carter asks *Which Way is South Africa Going?*. R. W. Johnson asks *How Long Will South Africa Survive?*, and is answered after a fashion by Messrs Gann and Duignan. The title of a new book by Theodor Hanf, Heribert Weiland and Gerda Vierdag, *South Africa: The Prospects of*

Peaceful Change, is in a sense a question. The blunt answer is that the prospects are not good. But the authors give a lengthy answer. They begin in any case, quite properly, with an epigraph - it might, alas, stand as his epitaph - from Steve Biko: "Even if the prospects for peaceful change are extremely slim, they are worth investigating." The book is based on comprehensive opinion surveys throughout South Africa, conducted in 1974, 1976 and 1977. It is a mine of information, although for much of its length scarcely in the parlance of the Rand) a payable one.

Making fun of the social sciences is easy and unfair. But there is something comical about the way in which the authors - academic sociologists - use the professional techniques of interrogation so laboriously to produce conclusions which any newspaper reporter might have provided more quickly and more cheaply. Table 7.5 (there are many tables) shows that 100 per cent of those who vote for the ultra-white supremacist HNP are "intelligent" in their attitudes to change. Elsewhere we learn that "there is also racial prejudice among blacks". The authors are fond of italics, especially when they feel that a blinding glimpse of the obvious calls for emphasis: "the high degree of identification between the vote and the party guarantees the NP a decisive (electoral) majority". A large part of the book could be summarized as, the blacks want power more than ever and the whites still don't want to give it up - not a startling conclusion.

For all that, there is much of interest. Some of it is in interviews with Nationalists, mostly politicians but also clergymen, journalists and academics. Off the record they can express thoughts which would be rigorously repressed in public. Several Afrikaners show guilt about the treatment of the mestizo Coloureds. One says, "The Coloureds must be recognized as members of our nation" another, "The integration of the Coloureds is the only possible solution. The politicians know this; but they refuse to admit it..." (It should be added that a Coloured leader says, "I reject a special solution for the Coloureds. I refuse to support measures of this kind. I don't want to be a collaborator.") The old score of relations between the Afrikaners and the English-speaking whites - Anglikaners in William Plomer's phrase - is here too. There is a nice example of Boer disdain for the *rooinek*. A conservative Dutch Reformed pastor says, "You can see the difference between Afrikaner and Anglikaner" by comparing what students from Stellenbosch and Cape Town do on a Sunday. The former do social work among the poor. The latter seduce Coloured girls.

But the most important part of the book deals with black attitudes. Being South Africans, the speakers go back to history. An African National Congress (ANC) leader asks, "What is all this nonsense about 300 years of white history? The Portuguese were in Africa for 500

years and they had to leave"; and a "moderate" homeland politician says, "It is high time people stopped talking nonsense about South Africa being empty before the whites arrived. That's ideology not history." There is of course rhetoric about black unity but several interviews reveal deep splits within the black leadership. "There is increasing polarization not only between black and white but between black and black." A Black Consciousness man says, "We are separated from the ANC less by a generation gap than by a gap of politics at different times. The London ANC with its strong influence of the white Communist party is far in our left, while the African Nationalist ANC (Dar-es-Salaam) is perhaps a little to the right of us."

The interviews touching on Inkatha are particularly illuminating. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's movement is not purely Zulu, but Zulu nationalism is its driving motor. Its success has vexed both the Pretoria government, which has on its hands a "homeland" leader who is a politician of high ability and who, whatever his ultimate intentions, is no corrupt stooge; and the old Left which affects to believe that racial national differences within South Africa. Several speakers testify, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, to the success of Inkatha. Having expressed his admiration for and resentment of Chief Buthelezi, one of them concludes, "What he still has is an ethnic base - which isn't going to help him at all - just as it hasn't helped anyone in Africa." That is good, even for the land of lies, when one reflects on such African phenomena as Mau Mau, Nigerian politics, Mr Mugabe's ZANU - or indeed Afrikanerdom.

To understand this last there are worse places to start than *The White Tribe of Africa*. There are better, however: two of the best books on the subject, differing in interpretation but both written from the inside, are Heribert Adam's and Hermann Giliomee's *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power* and W. A. de Klerk's *The Partisans in Africa*. Adam and Richard West's *The White Tribes of Africa of 1964* - there is no copyright in titles - dealt penetratingly with the Afrikaners. This book is a television spin-off, based on the recent BBC series which David Dimbleby presented, and David Harrison produced. It bears the traces of its origins, such as interviews with obscure but telegraphic persons, and it does not pretend to be a serious work of history, but it is lively and readable. It is also handsomely produced, and cheap for what it is.

Mr Harrison covers, although not quite chronologically, the main events in Afrikaner history, settlement under the Dutch East India Company, British conquest, the "century of wrong", the Great Trek, the successful first and unsuccessful second "Wars of Independence", the long march from 1902 to 1948 when the history of the Boers and of South Africa merged. All of this is useful and indeed important for a country where history lives even more vividly, and with even more malignant effect, than in Ireland. Since the programmes were shown the story has been brought up to date to cover "Muldergate", the last election and the latest stratagems of Mr Botha's government.

One stratagem about which too little is known is the activities of BOSS (the Bureau of State Security); that is to say we have little reliable information about its surreptitious operations. Gordon Winter's book - ostensibly an account of his years as a BOSS agent - scarcely helps. The best that can be said about it is that it casts comic light, of a sort, on an untidy subject. As a book it is abysmal, rambling in construction and trashy in style: "She did better than that and treated me to a fabulous lunch at Les Ambassadeurs, one of the richest eating places in London. The bill for lunch, with two bottles of champagne, was nearly £50." Again there is an enjoyable description of Mr Norman Scott: "The timbre of his voice was soft, even musical, and his cultured English accent was such that he sounded like a duke."

The trouble is knowing what, if anything, to believe. For Winter takes us not just to a land of lies but straight to the Liar Paradox (in which we are told by a Cretan, "All Cretans are liars"). By his own says "I am a Cretan". By his own account he is a petty criminal and a hanger-on of gangsters, a common informer and an agent provocateur. Nor does the way in which his story is told inspire confidence. He is apparently one of those lucky people with total recall. Long passages of dialogue from many years ago are quoted directly. Some of them are merely hearsay, such as a conversation that the late Baron Fischer is said to have had in his prison cell with H. J. van den Bergh, head of BOSS. The reader is unlikely to share Winter's belief in its authenticity. Again, although there was certainly some South African involvement in Biafra during the secessionist war, it is straining credibility to accept the author's statement that "Mr P. W. Botha (then minister of defence), secretly sent 200 South African troops, wearing false uniforms, to fight in Biafra... Years later I was told at a high level in BOSS that Mr Botha had been asked to send the troops by the American CIA which had masterminded Colonel Chukwuemeka Ojukwu's proclamation on 30 May 1967 that Biafra was to be an independent state."

It is small wonder that the anti-apartheid movement has been divided as to whether publication of this book is on balance a good thing (Mr Ronald Segal has said that he may end his connection with Penguin Books on account of it, a threat which must have caused some wry amusement in Pretoria.) In the end, disentangling what is true and useful in the book is a thankless and almost impossible task. Winter was undoubtedly some sort of BOSS employee, undoubtedly had access to files which he seems to have retained (but how?) and quotes from, undoubtedly got up to various dirty tricks. The book is best treated as a toxic sample of deep and very dirty waters.

BOSS, in fact, is at the sharp end of a ferocious power struggle. It may be that the men of BOSS - and of ANC and of Inkatha - understand the real world of power better than the authors of *South Africa: The Prospects of Peaceful Change*. We said earlier that making fun of the social sciences is unfair. But even when, as in the case of Theodor Hanf and his co-authors, academic writers are grimly factual, there is a sense of remoteness from reality. It is hard not to smile at such statements as "Simulation games in the Stanford study of the causes of World War I have shown that a different perception of hostility might have prevented the outbreak of war." But then the leaders of Europe in 1914 - like Messrs Botha and Buthelezi - had not worked at the Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung.

Even the authors begin, dimly to perceive, this at the end of their book: "the conflict about prosperity is fundamentally negotiable" and "the conflict about identity, although far more difficult is not insoluble grained certain preconditions and reservations. What about the third conflict - conflict about power?" What indeed? The reason why, in the end, the prospects for peaceful change are poor in a power contest as intractable as the South African one is that, as the authors' compatriot put it, the great questions of our time are not settled by resolutions and majority votes but by blood and iron.

More appropriate than Bismarck's phrase, in the context of South Africa, might be the title Fritz Stern gave to his life of Bismarck's banker Blocheröder: gold and iron. The course of South African history would have run differently without the triumph of Afrikaner Nationalism, but in the end it has been shaped most of all by South Africa's vast mineral wealth. One of the reasons why *How Long Will South*



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Africa Survive? was such a good book was that R. W. Johnson knew this. Maybe as a consequence he did not suffer from unreasoning optimism. Although he did not answer the question in his title precisely, he wrote: "To put it bluntly: if the Pretoria regime adopts a sufficiently ruthless and brutal policy at home it may well be able to repress black rebellion well into the twenty-first century: if it is willing to be sufficiently tough and flexible over Rhodesia and Namibia (allowing truly representative regimes to emerge there) and if it is wise enough to keep its troops at home, its future would seem secure until well into the 1990s."

All the same Johnson was naturally influenced by the events of the

time when he wrote - Saweto and its aftermath, the South African military fiasco in Angola in November 1975, and the coincident slump in the price of gold. Since then Pretoria has retrieved the situation on most fronts. Saweto was followed after a short lull by another period of internal repression, the killing of Biko and the arrests of late 1977. The South African government has accepted a representative regime in Zimbabwe, in an ill-natured and brutal way (and it has after all just as much of an economic stranglehold on Mr Mugabe's Zimbabwe as it had on Mr Smith's Rhodesia, indeed more so), and will probably accept one - after stalling as long as possible - in Namibia. It makes cautious military interventions in Angola and, by proxy, in Mozambique, but may yet learn

the wisdom of keeping its troops at home.

The government has continued to undermine black opposition by force and cajolery and, as Theodor Hanf and his co-authors say, there has been over the last two or three years "fierce and increasingly bitter factional rivalry among internal [black] political leaders". Above all, gold continues to provide the lubricant which eases every change of gear. The Johannesburg brokers are now winning about the drop in the price of gold (from about \$620 per ounce in early December 1980). But even at \$390, to the disinterested observer the striking thing is that over the last ten years - the great decade of inflation - the price of gold has quadrupled in real terms.

Anyone who thinks that peaceful real change - or far that matter violent revolution - in South Africa is imminent deludes himself. So does anyone who thinks that a date for the end of white-ruled South Africa can easily be fixed. African Nationalism gives and takes lessons in realism every month. It has adapted Vervorend apartheid into neo-apartheid and will turn neo-apartheid into something else, with a view of course to preserving its power, not surrendering it. Opponents of the South African regime have had an extended opportunity to study pragmatism, patience and cunning from their foe. False hopes should be put away. South Africa is a case in point where there was one for Gramsci's prescription: pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.

Covering the continent

By Humphrey Fisher

ROLAND OLIVER and MICHAEL CROWDER (General Editors):

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Africa

492pp. Cambridge University Press. £18.50.

0 521 23096 9

JOCELYN MURRAY (Editor):

Cultural Atlas of Africa

240pp. Oxford: Phaidon Press. £17.95.

0 7148 2045 8

These two volumes are at once comparable and contrasting. They are identical in price, yet the *Encyclopedia* is twice as large. Both open with the physical setting. The *Encyclopedia* then devotes 130 pages to "The African past", beginning with ancient Egypt but with just over half concerned with the European colonial period. A shorter section follows, on individual countries since independence. Then there are chapters on various contemporary themes - government, natural resources, religion, arts and recreation; and the like - concluding with three chapters on Africa and the world.

The *Atlas* has no separate historical section; more than half its main text comprises individual national entries, less strictly contemporary than those in the *Encyclopedia*, and not in any rigorous sense explicitly "cultural". The *Atlas* also includes a "Cultural background" section, covering some of the same themes as are in the historical or contemporary portions of the *Encyclopedia*; even the most narrowly cultural - architecture, arts, music and dance - receive proportionately just as much attention in both volumes (and, in one case, from the same contributor). The *Atlas*'s "cultural background" is dotted with "special features", as on Yoruba traditional religion, or on the mapping of Africa; some are rather brief - "health and healing", for example, occupies a single page. The *Encyclopedia* is not an alphabetical conglomeration of disparate entries, but rather a survey of contemporary Africa, with a strong historical background, divided rather more than usual into distinct sub-headings. The *Atlas*, fittingly, is better supplied with maps which constitute its main contribution.

Both books are lavishly illustrated; the *Atlas* with 333 pictures, mostly in colour, is the more profuse. Some of the pictures are exquisite; among my favourites is an aerial view of camels, the animals themselves almost invisible against the sand, but their tall shadows standing out starkly.

Both books are well indexed, and the *Atlas* also has a gazetteer. The *Encyclopedia* does not index its maps, and neither index covers picture details completely. Contributors are listed (a few appearing in both volumes), and all contributions are attributed; but there is no index of authors, so that it is hard to identify the sum of their respective contributions.

Sympathetic, or merely dispassionate, writing about Africa still tends towards the apologetic. Arranging claims are made in these books. Much of the argument has a greater

architectural complexity than any other continent" (Ihan Asia?); Africans in diaspora "have been much more successful than the Jews in influencing the culture of the societies in which they lived"; "in the 19th century the Zulu nation-state... was no more a tribe than England was under Henry VIII"; among the Mosi and Fula surgical techniques are "highly developed"; and so on. Earlier attitudes are caricatured and then lamented: "In the past, many Christian missionaries and other visitors... closed... the whole of traditional African life as primitive or barbaric"; "the city is probably the last idea one would associate with Africa" - as if all the world had not heard, long ago, of Timbuktu - and so on. European influence is regretted: "ignorance has been compounded... by knowledge of different European languages, and consequent restriction of access to information for linguistic reasons" - as if English had not given millions of Africans access to the widest possible world of information, quite

apart from being the only practicable means of direct communication between countless different African groups. (Most of the preceding examples come from the *Atlas*.) When will African studies allow Africa to stand upon its own feet? The war of imperialism will never be won, in fact, until it is abandoned. Neither of the two greatest nineteenth-century observers of black Africa, Barth and Nachtigal, found such apologetics necessary, yet they were able to see African life pretty steadily and whole.

There is also a residual tendency to regard the quaint and exceptional as particularly African. My prize for the silliest comment in either book goes to this: "The 1970s clearly marked Africa's return to itself. The *Encyclopedia*, though it states that only between five per cent and ten per cent of Africa's Christians belong to the so-called independent churches, devotes the major part of its discussion of Christianity to these groups. Islam gets a good run: the Mopvi mosque, on the *Encyclopedia* cover, has a two-page photograph in

the *Atlas*. I do not share the *Encyclopedia*'s confidence that Islam shows an "increasing degree of acceptance, adaptation and tolerance" of traditional faiths: the whole thrust of Wahhabism favours from Arabia and elsewhere, and, less directly, of Iran's example, the whole underpinned with fabulous oil-wealth, favours a sternly fundamentalist approach.

There are inevitable problems with such books, in keeping up to date. The *Encyclopedia*'s observation that Gambia's future was once thought to lie in union with Senegal, though there is little Gambian enthusiasm for this, may be true enough, but has been overtaken by events. Less understandable is the fact that both volumes include a picture from Sierra Leone illustrating railways, although the country closed down its railway long ago.

Although neither volume fulfils its publishers' promises of comprehensiveness, each is crammed with interesting detail of all kinds, attractively and intelligently presented.

When elephants fight

By S. K. Panter-Brick

ARTHUR GAVSHON:

Crises in Africa

Battleground of East and West

320pp. Penguin. £3.95.

0 14 02 239 1

Arthur Gavshon's theme calls to mind the African saying, when elephants fight, the grass suffers. He sees Africa as a battleground where East and West, in pursuing their conflicting strategic, political and economic interests, offer the Africans weapons rather than food (although that too is invariably used as a weapon). His condemnation in East and West in a equal measure. If there are many more people in crisis of the United States than of the Soviet Union, this is not due to any difference in aims; it is solely a reflection of the fact that Americans are able to speak and write about public policy without fear or favour. Mr Gavshon makes full use of Congressional hearings, of leaked documents, and of allegations made by disillusioned CIA agents (eg. John Stockwell). However, he considers the Soviet Union to have pursued its interests with more competence. It has proved from American mistakes and found in Cuba a handy ally.

The chapter on Cuba is the least controversial. Its involvement in Africa is considered more legitimate because of its cultural affinities with Black Africa; and because it also is exposed to the pressure of East-West rivalry. Although Cuba has, far more than any other African country, the aid most interested and more attuned to general needs. He also insists that Cuba has not acted solely as a Soviet surrogate. On the contrary, he suggests that Cuba has acted on its own initiative, both in Angola and Ethiopia. In arguing that he minimizes Cuba's military and economic dependency on the Soviet

Union and portrays Castro as the accepted leader of the non-aligned movement. This is contended despite the strong protests within that movement against the endorsement by Castro of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, which, says Gavshon, "seemingly more from socialist convictions" than from socialist convictions, a strange conception of non-alignment.

No such indulgence is shown in the chapters devoted to the United States, Britain and France. Harold Macmillan is credited with having discerned "the winds of change" but his successors are accused of having induced a "change of mind". Gavshon should perhaps have checked the text of Macmillan's speech; it reads "As I see it, the great issue in this second half of the twentieth century is whether the uncommitted people of Asia and Africa will swing to the East or to the West". There is much substance in Gavshon's argument but too often he resorts to suggestion and implication rather than clear statements of fact. For instance, the Western Powers are held responsible for having helped South Africa develop "nuclear-power status" and it is asserted that "critical sectors of the Republic's nuclear energy programme were funded by the apartheid government's refusal to adhere to the world-wide Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty". The discussion, far from clarifying the limits of Western involvement, seems to imply that Western governments have actively assisted South Africa in developing the atomic bomb, or at least condoned its secret development. Gavshon does subsequently state that the Western Powers suspended their cooperation because of South Africa's refusal to sign the Treaty, but no attempt is made to reconcile this with earlier statements and suggestions.

Britain's role in Rhodesia is, in similar fashion, made out to have been more sinister than possibly was the case. In a section entitled "The Luck of Lord Soames" Gavshon attributes the successful termination

of the struggle for power to Mugabe's overwhelming electoral victory. There is a sense in which that is true. Gavshon must however be in error when he says that Soames acknowledged in an interview that "Mugabe had emerged winner with less than fifty seats - meaning with out an overall margin [sic] in the hundred member parliament... it would have been possible for Nkomo and Muzorewa to form a coalition government with the support of the bloc of twenty whites whose seats had been reserved for them". This is to ignore S 69 of the Lancaster House constitution which rules out the possibility of using the twenty "white" seats to keep out a "black" party which is in the lead, albeit with only a plurality of seats. Whenever may have been Soames's secret hopes, he cannot have nurtured a design to act unconstitutionally.

It is not only in detail that Gavshon allows his argument to run ahead of facts. His general contention that Africa is the helpless victim of East-West rivalries is itself an extrapolation of a particular set of events - the collapse of Portuguese rule in 1974-5, the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974, and the withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam. Outside intervention has not always been so intense as recent years; outside powers have not consistently conceived that interests in quito so angle-minded a fashion nor pursued them quite so blatantly as Gavshon suggests; nor has the diplomacy of the Africans themselves been so ineffectual as is implied. Nor, for example, are Islam or Nigeria given much weight as forces resistant to both East and West.

Mr Gavshon sees the continent through the eyes of a diplomatic respondent alarmed by recent events. The principal merit of his book is in providing an account which is up-to-date and lively. Even if the burden of the argument is questionable, it faithfully reflects present concerns.

LITERATURE

The pursuit of metaphor

By Christopher Salvesen

LAWRENCE LIPKING (Editor):

High Romantic Argument

Essays for M. H. Abrams

182pp. Cornell University Press. \$14.95

(£ 8.14 1307 9

There are six essays in *High Romantic Argument*, making rather a small Festschrift in honour of so distinguished and learned a scholar. No doubt economics are in blame but it looks like short measure compared with, say, *From Sensibility to Romanticism* (1962), a book of essays presented to Frederick Pottle which included twenty-six substantial articles (three on Gray's "Elegy" alone) and to which Abrams himself contributed his seminal piece on "The Greater Romantic Lyric". The papers printed in the present volume were delivered "by friends and peers" at a two-day symposium organized at Cornell University in April 1978; but even with the addition of an extempore reply, recorded and "very lightly edited" by Abrams (plus a bibliography and an editor's note), there is by the traditional standards of such productions considerably more *Fest* than *Schrift* - though even the festive element is faintly compromised, or coloured, by the general approach.

It must, in any case, be impossible to get the tone exactly right on such an occasion, with the honoured guest sitting there and taking it all in, impossible to avoid altogether little flurries of whimsy, flattery or perversity. But furthermore, these essays, according to their editor, share and are committed to exploring a common problem: "The problem, easier to state than to manage, is simply what to make of the work of M. H. Abrams. You may well think what a surprising difficulty. 'Something', we are told, 'in his achievement - perhaps his very solidly - puzzles a good many modern readers'. And yet, to be puzzled by the *Mirror* and the *Lamp* and *Natural Supernaturalism*, works dense with material but clear in purpose, does this not seem like wilful complication?

Amusingly enough, this editorial difficulty echoes one brought forward by Abrams himself towards the end of another of his seminal articles when he asks: "What are we to make of the phenomenon of the correspondence in Romantic poetry?" Having surveyed the metaphor of the breeze, providing many examples and making many connections, he shows how something incisive and responsible has to be done with the collected material - the distinctively Romantic quality of the image has to be brought out. And he takes the opportunity of attacking a then fashionable doctrine (it was 1957), archetypal criticism. He is concerned at its blurring, reductive, indiscriminate and learned a scholar. No doubt economics are in blame but it looks like short measure compared with, say, *From Sensibility to Romanticism* (1962), a book of essays presented to Frederick Pottle which included twenty-six substantial articles (three on Gray's "Elegy" alone) and to which Abrams himself contributed his seminal piece on "The Greater Romantic Lyric". The papers printed in the present volume were delivered "by friends and peers" at a two-day symposium organized at Cornell University in April 1978; but even with the addition of an extempore reply, recorded and "very lightly edited" by Abrams (plus a bibliography and an editor's note), there is by the traditional standards of such productions considerably more *Fest* than *Schrift* - though even the festive element is faintly compromised, or coloured, by the general approach.

Today's modernism is less open to satire if only because much of it is deliberately unsovereign; yet there is an underlying wishfulness at work, evident here in the way that Abrams's "relatively unproblematic attitude towards texts" is regarded as a kind of irritant. Do his writings really invite or require the self-reflexive, self-regarding, attention of contemporary academic criticism? As before the occasion, Abrams is not satirical in his reply; he plays conscientiously and skilfully with the post-structuralist notions already brought

forward and defends his own position with dignity. And he makes you wonder - could there not just have been a collection of useful scholarly articles honouring the recipient by their excellence and by their general relevance to his own fields of study? "In these deconstructed radically indeterminate days", perhaps not.

He believes in history, evidence, reason, meaning, authors, texts, himself; he remains an unconstructed humanist. Such clarity of purpose can be troubling. Hence several of these essays establish a relationship to Abrams' books by darkening their counsel, reading in, as Keats in the face of night, "huge cloudy symbols of a high romance".

The irony here, uncertain though it is in tone, pays a proper tribute to Abrams's humanism: what value *High Romantic Argument* has lies, as the title proclaims, in its being - at whatever level - an argument not a romance. The argument begins with two pieces representing Part I, "Visions of Wordsworth", "The Poetics of Prophecy" by Geoffrey Hartman, and "As With the Silence of the Thought" by Jonathan Wordsworth. Abrams does not refer to either of these in his reply (as he does to the other four articles), perhaps because their desultory if energetic intellectualism offers too many points to take up, none of which seems absolutely essential. Jonathan Wordsworth one expects to represent the English empirical approach and more enough he has good and particular things to say, though even he announces his line as wanting "to play the game of following associations" - which leads him in interesting and various directions on the subject of Wordsworth's language. He considers part of "the clumsy, half-powered opening passage" of *Prelude V* - "Oh, why hath not the mind / Some element to stamp her image on / In nature-some that near - to her own?" - and brings out the oddity and the characteristic originality of Wordsworth's point of view: "Instead of asking with Keats and others why life cannot have the permanence of art, he is asking why art cannot have the permanence of life."

Part II, "The Achievement of M. H. Abrams", begins with a piece by Wayne Booth entitled "History's Metaphor: Or, Is M. H. Abrams a Mirror, or a Lamp, or a Fountain, or...?" ("There may seem to be just a

breath of Barthes' automatic manufacture of paradox in my title..."). Booth contemplates the unavoidability of metaphor and, looking at *The Mirror and the Lamp* and *Natural Supernaturalism* ("those two curious elusive works"), goes on to ask "troublesome questions about the kind of knowledge they give us, if any". In the end he is rightly sceptical of "fashionable views that 'everything is metaphor'" and praises Abrams for "depth of specification and care in establishing... 'literal' connections".

Metaphors are of course an Abrams speciality: not surprising that contributors should show a preoccupation with what he calls here "a single aspect of my writings; that is, my use of changes in radical, constitutive metaphors as one key to important shifts in the intellectual and cultural history of the West." Abrams himself accounts for the life of the great metaphors - mirror, lamp, plant - not by reference to the mysterious goings-on of the logic of language, but only by reference to something beyond language which, applying loose-bound criteria, we identify as works of art. As Booth points out, Abrams's own writing is not highly metaphorical, although in writing history he naturally cannot escape using metaphor. His critical language receives some attention in the final piece by Jonathan Culler (material appearing, in different form, in his book *The Pursuit of Signs*). Abrams notes some necessary limits to the coincidence Culler observes between his (Abrams's) "treatment of metaphors and their treatment in poststructuralist writings", but he responds respectfully enough ("Culler, in addition to being brilliant, is plausible") - though Culler's deconstructive joke that *The Mirror and the Lamp* might have to be renamed *The Mire and the Swamp* seems a poor one from whatever angle - you examine it.

Abrams's style, sober and apparently unremarkable (how different from the "feisty prose" of his famous pupil Harold Bloom, a notable absence on this occasion), yet moves occasionally with a decorously "rapturous pedestals" (F. W. Bateson's memorable phrase about Wordsworth) and convinces simply by the weight of its material and the seriousness of its discourse.

The two other contributors, Thomas McFarland, who offers "A Coleridgean Criticism of the Works of M. H.

Abrams", and Lawrence Lipking, "The Genie in the Lamp: M. H. Abrams and the Motives of Literary History", both address themselves to the problem of defining Abrams's literary role. Lipking attempts a distinction between literary historians and critics; McFarland, after some reflections on the difference between reviewing and criticism, and on "the process by which canonicity is conferred on cultural offerings", and after asserting unexceptionably that critics should be learned (while reserving a point of view from which Abrams is not a critic, nor does his work qualify "for the exercise of criticism upon it"), decides that Abrams's writings occupy "a well-defined cultural position as interpretational commentary".

But finally Abrams is a teacher, not only in the sense of an educator, as Stephen Parrish observes in a brief Preface, one of his major roles, at least in America, is as general editor of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, but in the full Wordsworthian sense. He would not be a true writer on Romanticism, he would not be true to his subject, if he weren't. A Romanticism based on Wordsworth, supported and confirmed by Germany, is the best version we will find, however much is conceded to those reviewers who, on the publication of *Natural Supernaturalism*, complained about its selectiveness: no Scott (deliberately), no Byron - no history, no irony. There is something encyclopedic about *The Mirror and the Lamp* (McFarland claims to have worked, over a period of several weeks, "through the entire apparatus of footnotes in that volume..."). But *Natural Supernaturalism*, in Abrams's own words, "leaves no doubt of which many Romantic thinkers consider the necessary shape of all intellectual", is a performance of a different order. It evidently justifies, in Romantic terms, the self-consciousness and evolution of much current criticism. But it also speaks to us at another level altogether simply in what it has to say about the journey towards redemption through "life, love, liberty, hope and joy". After all it is the redemptive strain in Romanticism - Wordsworthian, Shelleyan, political and transcendental - which survives most strongly, and will continue to survive when readers have wearied of games and moved on from the play of the indeterminate.

of arrangement, the canon being be-
devilled, as Hayden Ward points out,
by disputes about the dating of original
versions. Does one, as Sharon
Bassett suggests, publish the essays
in order of their first publication, or
follow Soltau's recommendation to
"preserve the integrity of the
volumes we have", taking as copy-
text the last version printed in his
lifetime? The argument will doubt-
less be long, but Bassett's approach
is surely preferable if readers are to
recapture any sense of intellectual
and artistic development rather than
of crystallized statements, or to
understand the impact that Pater
made upon his contemporaries and
the counter-effect which their re-
sponse had upon his changing mode
of expression.

*Allegory and Representation: Selected
Papers from the English Institute,
1972-80* has now been published
(193pp. Johns Hopkins University
Press, £6.00/8.14/24.24 X). As the
editor, Stephen J. Greenblatt, ex-
plains in his preface: three of the
seven papers formed part of a pro-
gramme on "Allegory", the remaining
four on "Mimesis and Representation".
In the first group Paul de Man
writes on "Pascal's Allegory of Per-
suation", Joséphin on "The
Structure of Allegorical Desire" and
Robert M. Durling on "On the
Dissection of the Body of Health" in
the second the papers include "The
Possession in the Cave" by Hans V.
"Representation".

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formative and enjoyable reading. In
addition to five main papers it con-
tains three notes on a proposed new
collected edition and a survey of
"Walter Pater Studies: 1970-80" by
Robert Seller, editor of *Walter Pater:
The Critical Heritage* (1980).

In his introduction, Gerald Mon-
man draws attention to the potential
for exploring Pater's work outward
"to the other text of his era" and
"inward from the link between his
style and topics to the depths of his
psyche". The predominant direction
here is definitely outward, to the
placing of Pater within precise intel-
lectual and critical contexts. Indeed
in Laurel Brake's piece, "Judas and
the Widow", Pater himself becomes
the subject of a literary debate, be-
tween the proponents of "Indis-
cretion" and "respect" in biography.
His use of Benson's diaries from the
period in which he was compiling his
biography, providing a picture of
Jowett virtually blackmailing Pater
with romantic letters he had written
to a student, helps to explain the
appearance and the retreat from con-
fession evident in the revisions of
his work. In contrast, J. B. Bullen's
"Pater and Ruskin on Michelangelo"
directs us back to November 1871,
describing Pater's confident display
of his highly original views on Michel-
angelo's sweetness, "inwardness and
introspection" as a critique of Rus-
kin's famous denunciation of the
artist's "strength and science". In an
Oxford lecture six months before
Bullen, convincingly locates Pater's

Counting the pulses

By Jennifer Uglow

WALTER PATER:

An Imaginative Sense of Fact

Edited by Philip Dodd.

95pp. Frank Cass. £9.95.

0 7146 3183 3

These studies first appeared in a
special issue of the *Journal of Prose
Studies*. Their publication in book
form, with all that implies about a
wider circle of readers, a different
place in the library, a definite rather
than a provisional statement, prompts
thoughts of Pater's own move from
iconoclastic contributions to the
Westminster and *Fortnightly* in the
1860s, to the respectability of the
Macmillan volumes and what Sharon
Bassett describes as "eternal entom-
ment on the shelves of the family
library". It also reflects the insitu-
tionalization of Pater studies, where
there seems to be danger of a similar
process, in which non-conformist
works like Michael Levey's *The Case
of Walter Pater* are only grudgingly
admitted into the fold ("However
strange, this is a book that cannot be
ignored") and where at times Pater's
imaginative sense of fact seems sub-
merged beneath the academics' less
imaginative sense of scholarship.

This slim volume, which follows
last year's conference at Brasenose
College, Oxford, is intended less for
general readers than for Pater dev-

ion within a new understanding of
the period and the artist which
stemmed from Perkins's *Tudor
Sculptors* (1864). Grimm's biography
of 1860-63 and Quinal's 1863 edition
of the *Rime*.

Billie Andrew Inman is also con-
cerned with influence, bringing to
bear on the conclusion to *The Re-
naissance*, the force of vast research
on Pater's reading. One is presented
with a daunting list of "musings":
Lewes, Spencer, Tyndall, Hegel,
Fichte, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, Berke-
ley, Bacon, Locke, Lucretius, Plato,
Renan, Hugo, Baudelaire, Morria,
and more - but there is little sense of
the process by which the mosaic of
sources was created, a process which
seems governed less by fidelity to
originals than by the need to re-
phrase an underlying emotional
dilemma as an intellectual argument.
As Pater himself expresses it,

"A counted number of pulses only
is given to us of a variegated,
dramatic life. How may we see in
them